Rev. L. H. Wolff
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POR

PASTORAL DUTIES

HINTS

TO

SELF-EDUCATED MINISTERS.

INCLUDING

LOCAL PREACHERS, EXHORTERS,

AND OTHER CHRISTIANS,

WHOSE DUTY IT MAY BE TO SPEAK MORE OR LESS IN PUBLIC.

BY JAMES PORTER, D.D.,

AUTHOR OF "THE COMPENDIUM OF METHODISM," "HELPS TO OFFICIAL MEMBERS," "REVIVALS OF RELIGION," "COMPREHENSIVE HISTORY OF METHODISM," ETC.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION,

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OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

THE METHODIST BOOK CONCERN

NEW YORK CINCINNATI

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PREFACE.

THIS work has been written at the suggestion of itinerant preachers, whose opportunities for preparatory education were limited, and who claim that most homiletical books are too scholastic and exacting to accommodate their circumstances. They desire a work in English that will be more simple and practical, covering the whole ground from actual experience, and speaking kind and encouraging words to unfortunate brothers who have not enjoyed many educational privileges. We have tried to meet this demand, with what success others must judge.

Then, seeing how little has been done for Local Preachers, Exhorters, and other speakers in our social meetings, we have ventured to push out into this unoccupied field, and whisper words of cheer to those who have rather been tolerated in their respective lines of action, than encouraged and stimulated to higher achievements. We hope they will appreciate our intentions. If it be their duty to speak at all in

public, they should be assisted to speak in the best possible manner. And in order to do so, they need to prepare for the work.

Meaning by self-educated ministers, all who have not graduated from the schools in due form, my audience, so to speak, is a very large one, and affords ground of hope that somebody will be benefited. I have written as a Methodist, simply because I am one, and have been accustomed to look at the subject from this point of view; but if others who are covered by my title can endure our denominational terminology, they may find something in the work that will be useful to them. We commend it to the charitable forbearance of those who do not need it, and to the prayerful attention of all who sympathize with its objects.

THE AUTHOR.

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INTRODUCTION.

1. The most solemn and important duties which any man can undertake, are involved in the office and work of a minister of the Gospel. This will be clear, if we only follow out the meaning of those titles by which a minister is designated in the Holy Scriptures. He is a "*Watchman*," a "*Witness*," a "*Workman*," a "*Teacher*," a *Pastor*," an "*Evangelist*," a "*Minister of Christ*," an "*Ambassador for Christ*," a "*Steward of the Mysteries of God*," and he is called by many other appellations equally significant. While each one of these titles may imply or suggest some peculiar doctrine or truth of the plan of salvation, or some form of ministerial activity, not implied or suggested by any of the others, yet they are all full of great thoughts concerning the weighty responsibilities of a minister of the Gospel. To him is committed the wealth of instrumentalities for the salvation of the world, and he is bound to use them under the direction of Christ, and as His servant and minister, for the redemption and guidance of souls, and for the extension of His kingdom among men.

2. Into this office no man may enter unbidden.

"No man taketh this honor to himself but he that is called of God as was Aaron." The Methodist Church has from the first fully recognized the necessity of a *divine*, as well as a human call and appointment to the solemn office of the Christian ministry; and, that the human call rests for its propriety and authority, upon the profession and proofs of the divine call, so that in her economy it is not lawful for any man to take upon himself the office of public preaching, or of the administration of the holy sacraments in the congregations, before he is divinely called to execute the same, and that call has been recognized by the authorities of the Church. In our ordination service, the primary importance of God's own call is most fully acknowledged, and it is made the very ground on which the Church invests her ministers with her accrediting commission. It is therefore improper and misleading to class the holy ministry with law and medicine, and speak of it as one of the learned professions. It is not a *profession*, but a *vocation*—not a profession in the same sense as law and medicine are professions; and is a *vocation* in a sense in which they are not vocations. It is not a pursuit, chosen from among many equally open and equally obligatory, but one accepted upon the persuasion and conviction of a direct divine call to this sacred office.

3. It is the indispensable duty of him who is called to the office and work of the Christian ministry to avail himself of all possible helps and opportunities to

prepare himself for the highest usefulness in his divine calling. He must be a man of much and earnest prayer; of deep and constant piety. He must read and study God's holy word, and such other books as help to a knowledge of the same. The apostolic injunctions to Timothy were, "Give attendance to *reading*," and "*Study* to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word or truth." This young minister was commanded to *read* and *study*. These are necessary, that the preacher may be thoroughly furnished for his work. No study is too severe, no culture is too high, no sweep of knowledge is too broad for him who is to minister at the altar and preach the glorious Gospel of the blessed God. Nevertheless, it was not the theory of Christ nor of His apostles, neither was it of John Wesley, nor of the Church which he founded, that the culture of the schools constitutes a necessary qualification for entrance into this holy office. There was but one Paul in the college of apostles; the others were unlearned and ignorant men, in the sense in which Luke says of Peter and John, that they were such, that is, they had not been trained in the knowledge and learning of the schools. Wesley acquired the most profound and varied learning afforded by the best university of his times, but the men whom he sent out, and who set all England in a blaze, were not trained in colleges or seminaries; neither were those who laid the foundations and reared the superstructure

of Methodism in America. And yet these men were not strangers to knowledge and culture. They knew men, they knew books, they knew theology, they knew literature, they knew science. They were diligent and hard students their lives long. Their speech and their preaching were not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; the weapons of their warfare were not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds. They were called and sent of God, and He worked with them, confirming their words by signs following, and gave to them a mouth and wisdom which all their adversaries were not able to gainsay or resist.

The amount of preparatory study which one called to the ministry should accomplish before beginning his work, may not be always the same, and must be largely determined by the particular circumstances of each case. If he is in his early manhood, with good health, and can command the means to pay his bills, without borrowing, let him by all means go to college. But if his pecuniary affairs are in such condition that he must borrow money to pay his expenses, and at the end of his course, be overwhelmed with debts, the case is not so clear that he ought to go to college at all. His debts must soon be paid, and until paid they will increase rather than diminish. If payment be long delayed creditors will complain, and his reputation will suffer, his usefulness decline, and his com-

fort depart. The income of a young minister, after meeting necessary current demands, does not usually afford a large margin to apply in cancelling old scores. A thoughtful young man, who is in debt, seeing all this, hesitates at the door of the conference, and fears to enter, unless he can be assured of an appointment to some field of labor, whose munificent liberality will meet the necessities of his case. Such a field does not readily offer to one of his years and experience, and, failing of that, he either abandons the ministry altogether, or postpones his entrance upon its duties, until, by industrious toil in some employment or business more remunerative in the money line than preaching the Gospel, he can acquire sufficient means to pay his debts. In this he does wisely, but whether he did wisely in going into debt is quite another matter. It is significant on this subject, that from the beginning of the Church to the present hour, every minister on entering an annual conference has been confronted with the question, "*Are you in debt?*"

In such a case it is surely better that the young man forego his college training, however advantageous it might be to him otherwise, and give himself at once in faith and prayer to the work to which God has called him; and by hard study, diligence and devotion, acquire *in* the ministry, what his peculiar circumstances prevented him from acquiring before entering it. Even then he will find before him a course of study embracing literature, science, history, philosophy and

theology requiring four years earnest study for its completion, and which, if thoroughly mastered, will prepare him to stand before kings as an ambassador for Christ.

4. The *Hints to Ministers*, found in this volume, will be suggestive to any preacher however much he may have learned elsewhere; while they will be specially valuable to such preachers as have not enjoyed the opportunity of preliminary training in the schools. The author has himself seen long service as a Methodist preacher, and has travelled all the way along the path he points out to others, so that his counsels are not founded on mere theories and speculations, but on facts and experiences.

5. This book will also be helpful to the men composing that large and useful body among us,—the local preachers of our Church, of whom there are now more than twelve thousand. The first Methodist sermon on this continent was preached by a local preacher, and before any of Mr. Wesley's missionaries reached America, at least three local preachers were here preaching the Gospel and organizing Methodist societies. From that day onward they have been a great power in the evangelistic forces of the Church. From their ranks all our ministers of whatever grade or celebrity have come, while many who continued in the class of local preachers, were not only useful in their calling, but rose to distinction and eminence both in the pulpit and on the platform. They will find in this book many

important suggestions, concerning their reading and studies, the method of preparing and delivering sermons, the manner of conducting public worship, of leading prayer meetings, and other religious services, and in short, of doing almost everything that a preacher may be called upon to do in his office.

6. But beyond all this, the author devotes a considerable portion of these pages to the interests of the exhorters, a very useful class of men for whose special help nothing has been heretofore written. It is their duty to hold public meetings for prayer and exhortation, and they will find many important suggestions as to the best methods of preparing themselves for their peculiar work, and concerning the manner of fulfilling the duties of their office before the public congregation.

7. Still further, this book contains an important chapter designed for the more private, or non-official members of the Church, whose duty it may be to speak more or less in public. In this same chapter will be found some valuable suggestions to Christian ladies.

In harmony with the sentiments and practice of Methodism from the beginning, the author recognizes the important mission of the women of the Church in saving sinners and building up believers, and in many ways promoting the general interests of Zion.

Where common practice little more than tolerates their speaking when so inclined, he summons them to

the discharge of high responsibilities, and gives them valuable suggestions in relation to the work.

In a word, a proper use of these Hints must result in great good to those for whom they were written, and through them to the Church and to the world.

WILLIAM L. HARRIS.

HINTS TO MINISTERS.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY—ITS ORIGIN, OBJECTS AND SUPPLIES.

In attempting to decide upon the proper course to be pursued with reference to any enterprise, it is necessary to know what are the *objects* proposed. This is emphatically true with regard to preparation for the Christian ministry. Misapprehending its high and holy purpose, many advices have been given to candidates which savor more of human than of divine wisdom, and hinder, rather than help the cause they are intended to promote.

The Christian ministry derives its authority from Jesus, who originated it, and not from Moses or the prophets, or from John the Baptist. It was a new device for the propagation of the religion which He came to establish in all the earth.

God had long since designated individual

men, and classes of men for particular purposes, but not for this. The principal business of the ancient priests was to offer sacrifices; that of the prophets, to foretell future events; but that of Christian ministers is to preach the Gospel, "the good news," in such a manner as to command the acceptance of its benefits.

The commission under which they act reads thus: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark xvi. 15, 16). Judaism was chiefly limited to a single nation. Christianity extends its sympathies and provisions alike to all nations, and to each individual. It makes religion a personal business, and the salvation of souls the *grand object* of its ministers. They are to preach with special reference to this result—not human science or opinions, but the *Gospel*—not to glorify themselves, or entertain the people, but to make men see their *lost* condition, believe in Jesus, and openly identify themselves with Him.

St. Paul, who was called to be an apostle, understood the matter in this light. Speaking

of Christ, he says: "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man, in all wisdom, that we may *present every man perfect* in Christ Jesus, whereunto I also labor, *striving* according to His working which worketh in me mightily" (Col. i. 28, 29). And again, "Now we are ambassadors for Christ; as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor. v. 20).

His ideal of the objects of the ministry, are still further indicated in his letter to Titus, wherein he says: "Who gave himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke, with all authority" (chap. ii. 14, 15).

Acting on this understanding of their commission, the apostles "went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following" (Mark xvi. 20). And it is a fact that men who now preach the Gospel for this purpose, who really desire and intend to save sinners, do much the same thing, and with similar results.

Failure in ministers often comes of diversion. They lose sight of the proper object of preaching, and seek to *defend* the Gospel, or discourse prettily about it for general effect, rather than preach it for individual faith and immediate conversion. They forget that its best vindication and its highest charms are found in its saving results. The clear casting out of one devil by the power of the Spirit, converting one flagrant sinner into an acknowledged saint, will go further in defending it than many well drawn arguments. Being the power of God unto salvation, the Gospel, properly presented, will demonstrate itself, and carry conviction to hearts that no intellectual reasoning can effect. The minister stands in Christ's stead to seek the lost, and lead them to heaven. "You have nothing else to do," says our discipline, "but to save souls. It is not your business only to preach so many times, and to take care of this or that society, but to save as as many as you *can;* to bring as many sinners as you *can* to repentance, and with all your powers to build them up in holiness" (¶¶ 111, 112). The more directly he comes to the work the better will he be understood, and the more

likely to succeed. To be wasting his opportunities on other subjects, such as are frequently announced from the pulpit, will only show to his hearers that he is not speaking for God or souls. Salvation, necessary, immediate, and possible *now* to the perishing sinner, must be the theme in which all his preachings, prayers and tears centre, and to which they all tend. It was for this that Christ died, and now intercedes—that the Spirit strives, and all heaven is anxious. If he be a true minister, his thoughts, studies, and labors will be shaped with reference to this grand object. He may err in his judgment and methods, but his intention will be to lead men to Christ.

The high spirituality and difficulty of this work places it beyond the reach of ordinary minds. Unconverted men, however highly educated, have neither the heart or knowledge necessary to its performance. They may be well furnished on other subjects, and possess interest, zeal and intelligence to press them upon public attention; but they cannot be effective here. They are blind to the sinfulness of sin, the danger of sinners, and the charms of holiness. If they shall undertake the minis-

try, it will be for "a piece of bread," or to secure certain worldly advantages that it seems to promise. Nor can men religiously inclined, but without conscious love to God shed abroad in their hearts, do much better. Jesus therefore selected from among his followers such as were especially adapted to the work—converted men. And he did not transfer to them the right of appointing their successors. This prerogative He still retains, and calls His ministers now as He does not call men to be farmers, mechanics, merchants, or common laborers. We hear nothing from Him about the "priesthood of the people" explaining away the *specialty* of this call. Though He requires *all* His followers to let their light so shine before men that they may see their good works and glorify their Father which is in heaven, He does not call all to preach. Paul, who had personal experience on this subject, says, "No man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that was called of God, as was Aaron" (Heb. v. 4).

MANNER AND EVIDENCE OF THIS CALL.

As to the *manner* in which God calls men into the ministry, we may not speak with much

precision. He is sovereign, and appoints His own representatives, to please Himself, irrespective of human arrangements; but when one is really called, those who are in sympathy with the objects of the Gospel will be likely to discover it. God may reveal it to them as He revealed the call of Saul of Tarsus to Ananias (Acts ix. 15). When He does so, it is proper that the Church should manifest their acquiescence in it, and use their influence to insure success.

In regard to the *evidence* of the call, there is some diversity of opinion, with no inconsiderable agreement. All who are called, we believe, love God devoutly. They admire His character, government, and plan of salvation, and desire above all things else to please Him. They feel deeply concerned to win men to Christ. They cannot trifle lest they offend God, nor neglect duty lest blood be found on their garments. They harmonize also in having their attention directed to the duty of preaching, not perhaps by men, but by the Spirit of God. It may at first be only a vague impression, a kind of waking dream, and may be treated as a temptation, and banished as such. This was

the case with many of the best men who now stand in the holy place. They had no idea of preaching when first converted. Still their minds mysteriously lingered about the subject. They would often start up as from a pleasant reverie, and find themselves addressing an imaginary congregation, perhaps hundreds of miles away. But in spite of their unbelief, the subject impressed them, until it had created the conviction that God might be calling them to the work, and finally that He *had* called them, and they must not disobey on pain of His displeasure.

Other Christians love God, and desire to do good, but it is not usual for them to fancy that they are called to preach, even when they possess marked qualifications. Much less are they pressed with the duty to such an extent as to feel condemned in neglecting it, and especially to feel "woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel." This is the experience of those only whom the Lord calls. The call, then, is evidenced by an inward impression or conviction made upon the heart by the Holy Spirit.

But where one is really called, it will be manifested by collateral evidence. Others will

sometimes see it as well as himself, not always. Then he may be placed in circumstances which almost compel him to preach. Maxfield, Mr. Wesley's first lay itinerant, arose to read the Scriptures and exhort the people, when the Spirit so helped his infirmities, that he preached mightily, in spite of life-long prejudices, and Lady Huntington, and Wesley himself were obliged to admit that he was divinely called. John Nelson, a stone mason by trade, going home soon after his conversion, his neighbors desired him to give some account of his strange experience, which he did, at first, sitting in his own house. But some doubted. This led him to prove his points from the Scriptures. Directly, the house was too small for the congregation that gathered to hear him, and he stood at the door, and spoke so that many were awakened and converted, and he was made a preacher by public proclamation, contrary to all known rules of church order, and his own intentions. And he proved to be an apostle indeed to many souls. Another pious young man went to meeting to listen. The preacher had not proceeded far when he became confounded and took his seat. What

can be done? was the all-absorbing question. At length our youthful friend stood up and began to speak, when God so filled his mouth with arguments, that preacher and people insisted on his speaking again in the afternoon, which he did with great effect. Thus what these men had hardly thought of, was forced upon them in such a way that they were constrained to say, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good."

The case of Mr. Moody, whose fame is in all the world, is another instance of the kind. He did not think of preaching, and his church friends, seeing his ignorance and awkwardness, advised him not to speak in conference meetings lest he should offend some of the brethren. So he went into the streets and lanes, and talked to the children and others, and after a while, invited them into an old, forsaken room which he lighted with a tallow candle. But God blessed his labors, and made him an acknowledged preacher. Thousands attended upon his ministry, and many were converted. Methodism abounds in such cases, and has done so from the beginning.

A clear understanding of divine things, a

ready utterance, tact, and, especially, success in doing good, have great weight in deciding this question. "Fruit" is particularly convincing. But it cannot be denied that men are called to preach, in relation to whom, some of these outward circumstances are wanting. In such cases, however, the inward witness is correspondingly strong. For instance, one young man was so impressed that he must preach, that he ventured to name the fact to his pastor, who had no doubt that he was deceived, and advised him to dismiss all thought of it. But he could not rest, he must preach, and breaking through much opposition he did so, convincing all who heard him that he was not deceived. This was also true of another man who stammered so intolerably that he could hardly connect two words without faltering. The idea of his preaching was utterly preposterous. But his conviction was so deep and distressing, it was proposed to give him a trial, and an appointment was made for him, which brought out a crowd to witness an expected failure. But he went through triumphantly, and became an eminent minister. God's ways are not as man's ways on this subject.

TRUE AND FALSE STANDARDS.

Good men often erect a false standard of ministerial qualifications. They require of all what few only possess. Hence they can see no call, where these qualifications do not exist; whereas it is no more necessary, especially under our itinerant economy, that every man should have all these endowments, than that every teacher should know Spanish, and every physician should be a dentist. The ministry occupies a large field, which requires a great variety of services, many of which are vastly more practicable to plain, pious, common-sense men, than to the more profound. In some cases, education disqualifies men for the highest usefulness among the masses, by creating a mutual aversion between them. To exclude from the ministry, therefore, all who have not attained to a certain literary status, is to clog the wheels of salvation, and doom a large portion of mankind to continuance in moral darkness.

Methodism owes much to its bold independence in this particular. God fortunately delivered John Wesley, its real founder, from some

of his High Church notions at an early day, so that he reluctantly accepted the ministerial coöperation of uneducated men, who gave good evidence of being moved by the Holy Ghost to the work. His method of testing candidates, which Methodists have wisely maintained, may be inferred from the following questions:

1. Do they know God as a pardoning God? Have they the love of God abiding in them? Do they desire nothing but God? And are they holy in all manner of conversation?

2. Have they gifts (as well as grace) for the work? Have they (in some tolerable degree) a clear, sound understanding; a right judgment in the things of God; a just conception of salvation by faith? And has God given them any degree of utterance? Do they speak justly, readily, clearly?

3. Have they fruit? Are any truly convinced of sin, and converted to God by their preaching?

"So long as these three marks concur in any one, we believe he is called of God to preach. These we receive as sufficient proof that he is moved by the Holy Ghost" (Dis., par. 99, 100).

Holding young men to these tests, we shall

be likely to elevate the standard of ministerial qualifications, and protect the office against the admission of unsuitable candidates.

These evidences should be required *in perpetuity*. Ministers have been known to lose the spirit of the work after entering upon it, and to become ineffective, and even worse. In such cases they should return to their first love or retire, though they may continue to be respectable in character. It has been well said that "the form or ceremony of preaching may be taken up and laid aside as easily as other forms; but true preaching, the preaching that Christ appointed, demands the power of an active faith, a holy sympathy, and a conscious mission from God" (Kidder's Homiletics, p. 33). No one should remain in the ministry a day after he has lost the qualities which evidenced his call to it, except where he is earnestly seeking to have them restored. The sooner he shall discover his utter incompetence, obtain help from God, or leave the pulpit, the better it will be for the Church.

This was clearly illustrated in the case of the founder of Methodism. With abundant religion, such as it was, and a polished education,

his ministry was a sad failure in spiritual results, until he was "born again," and filled with the Holy Ghost.

One of the greatest dangers of Methodists lies just at this point. No amount of wealth or learning, or popular favor, can save us from ruin, without a divinely called and inspired ministry. Our excellent doctrines and economy are powerless for spiritual results, in the hands of blind guides.

This suggests the wisdom of the long probation, to which we subject candidates. It is none too long to find out whether they are *adapted* to the work, which is its main object. It indicates also the propriety of locating men in full connection who render themselves unacceptable to the people, and are not wanted because not useful. When a man has had a fair chance to demonstrate his call, in the way of "fruit," and fails to do it, he had better retire, and apply himself to some other calling.

The Church cannot afford to carry along a horde of incompetent young preachers. No matter who they are, or how much they may know, not meeting the demands of the cause, they should be kindly dismissed, and their

places filled with efficient men. It is a favorable sign of the times that some conferences have lately undertaken to examine candidates more carefully with regard to their *adaptation* to the work.

These remarks are not designed to apply to sick or aged ministers, who retain the Spirit, though they are incompetent to do much service. If they have fulfilled their part of the contract involved in assuming the responsibilities of the ministry, according to their ability and opportunities, it would be unkind to disfranchise them. Our policy rather provides for putting them on the retired list, and treating them with sympathy.

CHAPTER II.

DIFFERENT PROCESSES OF ENTERING THE MINISTRY.

WHAT course one should take, who is contemplating the ministry with more or less thoughtfulness, and conviction that he is called to the work, is a serious, and often a very perplexing question. This is owing to a variety of circumstances :

1. To the different opinions and practices which prevail among the churches, some requiring more, and others less preparation, while not a few incline to begin at once and leave the matter of preparation entirely to providential direction.

2. To the different conditions in which men, thus moved, are placed, involving age, literary attainments, the state of society, financial embarrassments, opportunities for preparatory training, etc. God seems not to have followed any apparent rule, in calling men with regard to these, or other circumstances. Some have

been impressed with the duty in early youth, and shaped their course accordingly. Others did not even think of the matter as a possibility, until they were far advanced in life, and involved in business. Indeed they were open enemies of all religion, but being mercifully converted, felt that they must preach, though wanting in preparation, and surrounded with hindrances.

3. The conflicting advices given to candidates, is another source of embarrassment, some urging them to leave all and preach at once, others recommending a partial or thorough course of study, while many, equally sincere, would have them drop the subject, as a suggestion of the devil.

In this state of affairs, each one must settle the question for himself, 1. As to whether he ought to preach at all. 2. If so, whether he should leave his present calling and give his whole time to the work, or preach occasionally, as opportunity may offer, and his business allow. 3. In connection with what church. 4. Whether he should commence immediately, or first seek to obtain an education. No one else can settle it so well. He knows his own

convictions, affinities and circumstances, and ought not to be inveigled into any line of procedure against his deliberate judgment, taking everything into the account. He had better be a good teacher, or exhorter, by following his own convictions and adaptations, than to become an inefficient preacher, by following the opinions of others.

As a matter of fact, these different courses have sometimes succeeded well, and not unfrequently they have failed, so that some minds have, at different times, approved and rejected all of them. John Wesley knew of but one door into the ministry at the commencement of his spiritual career; but in process of time, God showed another, which he felt obliged to recognize. Most of his helpers entered by this door, and became travelling or local preachers, as circumstances seemed to require. Methodism was planted in America by two of the latter class, namely, Philip Embury, in New York, and Robert Strawbridge, in Maryland, both from Ireland. Capt. Webb, another of the same rank, a stalwart Englishman, soon joined them, and together they made a fair beginning, before Mr. Wesley knew anything

of the matter, proving the wisdom of the order.

This has been the policy of Methodists generally, from the commencement, with some improvements. In the first place, they encourage all young men of fair capacity to exercise their gifts in speaking and prayer, so soon as they are converted. Their six months' probation, under proper tuition, gives them a pretty correct knowledge of doctrine and discipline, while their frequent public exercises improve their gifts in speaking and prayer. Pursuing this course a year or more, possibly five or ten years, if found worthy, they are licensed to exhort or preach.

But that they may not be advanced faster than their capabilities justify, they are subjected to a close examination at every stage of their progress. 1. For license to exhort, and annually afterwards, so long as they hold that office. 2. For local preacher's license. 3. For recommendation for admission on trial in the annual conference. 4. Then they are examined by the annual conference for admission, and afterwards, for two years, on the prescribed course of study, for deacon's orders. 5. Finally,

they have to pass two other annual examinations, for elder's orders, when, if their conduct, labors, and examinations are satisfactory, they are admitted to the full ministry. This gives them a training in the Methodist Episcopal Church of from five to twenty years from the time of their conversion to their graduation to elder's orders. They may accomplish it in four years from the date of their first license, or they may linger along on the different stages of their progress, and never reach that point. Some are satisfied with the exhorter's license, and many wisely continue in the local preacher's office during life, and do good service, while others advance to the itinerancy, and continue in it to the end, or fall back into the local ranks.

In all these departments, many come short of what is anticipated, while others exceed their highest expectations. On the whole, the plan has worked admirably, and seems well adapted to the present time. As to those who have small opportunities for preparatory study, it is *necessary*, while those who take a more thorough course, manage to obtain orders about as soon as they are ready for full pastoral work.

But this showing is not complete without

some further reference to the course of study and examinations before mentioned. It involves, 1. Personal religious experience, life and habits. 2. A fair English education. 3. Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. 4. General and systematic theology. 5. Church Government. 6. History, both civil and sacred. 7. The Christian ministry, its origin and work. 8. General intelligence, sufficient, at least, to place the several office bearers above the average rank of those whom they are expected to serve, particularly in relation to religion and morals. (Dis., pp. 351–366.)

It will be observed that a knowledge of the different languages taught in colleges and theological seminaries, is not required. Nor is it repudiated. Candidates are left to follow their own judgment with regard to these and some other branches of learning. We furnish the colleges and seminaries for the most thorough literary and theological training, but do not make graduation from either a prerequisite to the ministry.

It is worthy of note, also, that we *try* our candidates before we license them, instead of educating them first and trying them afterwards,

as is done by some other demonstrations. We educate them *in* the work and among the people, and not out of it; *for* it specifically, and not equally for any other calling, as is done in the regular college course. We begin their education by training them to *speak in public* of what they feel and believe, while they are seeking to know more. They are not expected to speak correctly or profoundly at the beginning, but speaking and preaching as they proceed with their studies, they learn the art of speaking readily and forcibly.

How this policy has succeeded in achieving the objects of preaching need not be stated. Our history is significant on this point. And though our ministers have been characterized as uneducated and incompetent by certain clerical pretenders to superiority, they have found little difficulty in entering the pastorate of other denominations, without delay for further literary attainments.

But some churches still insist on their old plan of preparation, involving two or three years in the academy, *four* in college and *three* more in the theological seminary, with little preaching until the last year, and not much

even then. They wisely waive all this, however, when they find promising recruits from other sects, and the more readily, because it so often fails to produce the style of ministers demanded by their people and work.

But this is nothing to us. All denominations are at liberty to follow their own convictions. However wise the policy, it is too slow a process to meet our demands. The Methodist churches of America need at least *one thousand* fresh recruits annually to repair the waste of disease and death in the conferences, and supply the new fields which invite their pastoral care, while our present facilities for so complete preparation, furnish less than one-quarter of that number. This deficiency is made up by brethren of less opportunities, many of whom seem not to suffer seriously for the want of preparatory training, either in their popularity or usefulness. Many of them could not have gone through with this laborious and expensive course, had they desired to do so, while others did not deem it expedient.

Now, while we are not disposed to dictate to any young man as to the particular course he shall take with regard to entering the min-

istry, we do solemnly advise all to act in view of their responsibility to God and the judgment of the great day. You have the different theories and practices of the churches before you. If God has called you to preach, He intends that you shall succeed, and His will is that you shape your course purely with reference to that result.

It is true, too, generally, we believe, that the conviction of a divine call to preach embraces, not only the main objects to be sought, but something of the manner and connection of the preaching. Jonah's call required him to go to Nineveh, and proclaim a particular truth. The work not being agreeable to his taste, he ventured to deviate from instructions so far as to go to Tarshish. He followed his own preferences rather than God's command. So Paul was called to be an apostle to the Gentiles, and did not confer with flesh and blood. Young men who feel moved to preach, ordinarily follow the arrangements of the denomination which was instrumental in bringing them to Christ. Some, however, take a different course, too often, we are sorry to say, in the direction of more worldly honor, less work,

and better pay. And a few seem to feel called upon to strike out independently, though the reason for this course is seldom manifest. Our settled belief is, that whatever the call may be, it is best for a young man to follow it, in the true interests of religion and the salvation of men. If it shall prove to be a mistake, he can change afterward. But in determining what course he will take, with regard to preparation, he should carefully select one which is not calculated to abate his natural or spiritual force, and tone him down to the dead monotory of some artificial model. Duty and utility should be his invariable guide.

If, after careful consideration and prayer, you shall be satisfied that you can accomplish more for God and the salvation of souls, by entering the work at once, do so, trusting in Divine Providence and your own indomitable purpose. Let no ambitious or selfish motive deter you. If it shall appear that a year or two, more or less, devoted to preparatory study in the schools will enhance your usefulness, and your circumstances will admit of it, that is probably the wiser course for you to adopt. It will save you a great deal of hard work

afterwards. The beginning of education is the most difficult part of it. Once master the rudiments, and learn *how* to study, and you will have little to fear. But at all events, make your selection in view of the grand objects of the ministry, and your obligations to God, as a called minister of the cross, independently of worldly ambition.

Then, "Go, teach all nations," says the fervid Lacordaire; "fear neither the difficulties of foreign tongues, nor the differences of manners, nor the power of secular governments. Consult not the course of rivers nor the direction of mountain ranges; go straight on. Go as the thunder of Him who sends you—as the creative Word went, which carried life into chaos—as the eagles go and the angels." (*Pulpit Table Talk*, p. 116.)

But do not let the fact that you have not the means of prosecuting a thorough course of study in the schools deter you from obeying what you feel to be a divine call to preach. The most learned preachers are not always the most effective. While high culture has many advantages, it does not insure success; it has some drawbacks, especially when applied to the

commonality of society, with which the ministry has chiefly to deal. Hence it is that men of moderate attainments, both in Church and State, often outstrip their literary superiors in the race for popular favor and influence.

I refer to this point because so many hold opposing views, and discourage all leanings toward the ministry, without thorough education, which is out of the reach of many pious young men. The fathers said, "Go preach, and study by the way," and it was under this policy that they developed our most distinguished men, bishops, commentators, theologians and preachers; and filled the world with their doctrine and measures. With these facts before him, and especially with the vastly augmented facilities of the present day for the acquisition of knowledge, no young man, called of God to the work of the ministry, should hesitate to make the attempt, though it may be impossible for him to spend much time in the schools.

The call indicates capacity and adaptation, already possessed, though not often realized; or to be conferred *in obedience*. No man can feel more surprised or incompetent than did Moses

when called to deliver his brethren from bondage, yet he proved to be the right man for the work. He *tested* his call, and found it to be of God. So should every young man do who believes himself called to preach, by moving out on the line of duty. If God does not help him he will soon see his mistake, and retire to private life.

CHAPTER III.

KNOWLEDGE NECESSARY TO THE MINISTRY, WITH SUGGESTIONS AS TO ITS ATTAINMENT.

WHATEVER differences of opinion may exist among us with regard to preparation for the ministry, there should be little doubt of the importance of continuous study *in* it. The drill of the schools ought to *finish* one's education in some particulars, and it generally does so, we believe, but still it leaves enough to be learned afterwards to require the closest application. Hence, those who regard their diplomas as a release from further effort, soon become stale and ineffective. Graduates, even, must study, or fall short of reasonable expectations, while brethren of less preparation, may, with proper application, attain to enviable distinction.

To compass the curriculum indicated in the last chapter, requires no little effort. But that is only the beginning of necessary attainments to one who proposes to devote his life to ministerial and pastoral work.

Preachers must understand their business to be successful. They are engaged in a great work, involving many difficulties. It is not enough for them to know God and his plan of salvation, but they must know man, his aversions and susceptibilities, and how to command his attention and faith.

To expect that God will give them the requisite information, without effort on their part, is fanaticism. While they trust Him for help, and the desired result, they should be just as active in seeking to be efficient, as they would be if everything depended on themselves.

THE BEGINNING OF RIGHT KNOWLEDGE.

The new birth brings light, and begets a desire to know everything appertaining to it. It at once gives the study of the divine character and government, the duties, privileges and religious possibilities of men, controlling interest. And all the more so, as we may feel moved to persuade others to become Christians. Indeed, a proper call to the ministry, implies a heart and mind for the work; in other words, a spiritual fitness for it.

It is noticeable, also, in tracing the history of ministers, that the most successful of them were characterized by thorough conviction of sin. The Wesleys were terribly awakened, and crucified themselves with many fastings, prayers and self-denials, crying out of the depths, when God put a new song into their mouths. Whitefield was so distressed, when in prayer for mercy, that the sweat dropped from his face. "God only knows," he wrote, "how many nights I have lain upon my bed groaning under what I felt. Whole days and weeks have I spent in lying prostrate on the ground in silent or vocal prayer." Bishop Hedding, though a moral young man, and so far religious as to read a sermon on the Sabbath to the little congregation where he lived, was at last overwhelmed with anxiety, and earnestly sought the Lord for weeks. The terrible conviction of Saul of Tarsus too, laid the foundation of his wonderful conversion and usefulness. No subsequent education can atone for the absence of something of this experience.

It is equally true of most effective preachers, that they had a *happy* conversion. This is another desirable qualification for the work.

No knowledge of pardon, or the work of the Spirit on the heart, acquired by reading, hearing or observation, can supersede the necessity of a positive, personal experience of this sort. Indeed, there can be no proper knowledge of religion without it. Hence the prayer of the backslidden Psalmist, "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me by Thy free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto Thee." (Psa. li. 12, 13.)

Many began to preach with this outfit before they were formally licensed. God called them first, and the Church afterwards. Their experience was a high endowment of itself, embracing the fundamental elements of dogmatic, experimental and practical theology. With such a preparation, it was safe for them, and it is safe for every man of good judgment and fair intelligence to commence preaching in a social and informal way.

But candidates must not stop here. God helps those who seek to help themselves. They must pray, think, read, study, and plan, to know what to say, and how, when and where to say it. Though Jesus said to His first min-

isters, "When they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak," He did not mean to discourage reasonable study, but to comfort them in view of probable surprises, and emergencies, when they would have no opportunity for preparation. He had already cautioned them to "beware of men," and to "be wise as serpents and harmless as doves." Ministers are forbidden to *worry*, but commanded to work, and improve all available means to render themselves effective.

It is not my purpose to point out a course of study, but to offer a few suggestions on the subject.

1. The Bible is the minister's text-book. There can be no substitute for it. Candidates for the ministry should read it through and through, carefully and prayerfully, until they understand its general scope and meaning, and the object and drift of the several books. This last point is considered of so much importance, that some editions of the Bible contain an introduction to each book, giving a brief statement of its origin, objects, etc., which can but be

useful to most readers. (*See Pronouncing Bible issued at the Methodist Book Concern.*)

We advise, also, that you mark and commit to memory, if possible, many of those passages which bear directly on the object of your present endeavors.

1. Because you can never memorize so easily as when young and interested in the acquisition.

2. Because, being thus committed and brought into use, they will never be forgotten.

3. Because, if you delay it until you become encumbered with many duties, you will never do it at all.

Furthermore, you should familiarize yourselves with the historic facts, figures, parables and similes of the Bible, not only for the moral lessons inculcated by them, but to use in illustration of practical duties and principles. Illustrations from the Scriptures have a double force, and should always be employed when they meet the demand of the occasion.

In a word, the Bible should occupy the first place in a minister's studies. It not only has the advantage of being authoritative, but it furnishes many of the best and strongest expressions of feeling, and of *appeal*, to be found on

record. A preacher who has these at command, with the state of mind they represent, can but be interesting.

Besides, we recommend that you read the *same copy* of the Bible as far as practicable. Some minds are not well constructed for verbal memory, yet they seldom forget the book in which a favorite passage occurs, or its location on the page. By using the same copy, therefore, you can more readily find what you want.

We deem it important, too, that you use a *Pronouncing* Bible, that is, one in which all the proper nouns are divided and accented in the text in a way to show how they are to be pronounced. It is very difficult to remember the proper pronunciation of some of these words. We have heard good scholars make sad work with them. But *you* must not stumble here, and you will not, if you follow this advice, or read your lessons privately and verify your pronunciation before you appear in public. We knew one young minister who ruined his reputation, and received a nickname by an unfortunate mistake, in trying to pronounce "Samothracia."

We have no hesitancy in suggesting, also,

that you should consult some good commentary just so often as you need information as to the meaning of Scripture. You will prefer one written by a Christian man, of evangelical Arminian sentiments. Some commentaries really pervert the word of God in the interest of an exploded creed, and are not profitable for instruction, or correction in righteousness. And others are of a rationalistic character, which abound more in the fruits of a learned imagination, than in sound Gospel sense. They furnish beautiful treatises on moral and religious topics, which it may be well enough to read when you get time, but what you want now is the mind of the Spirit. Wesley's Notes, and Clarke's and Benson's Commentaries have been our standards, and are still exceedingly valuable. Those being produced by Dr. Whedon and his associates, furnish more commentary and less extraneous matter in smaller compass.

A good Bible dictionary will also assist you. Watson's will not meet your wants, it being less a dictionary than a collection of able essays on biblical and theological subjects. Smith's is quite complete. If too expensive for your means, you had better, perhaps, purchase that

of the American Tract Society, which is exceedingly valuable and convenient, and is worth more than it costs.

Webster's Unabridged Dictionary is almost indispensable. It is surprising to see the amount of biblical instruction it contains. Popular as it is, comparatively few have studied it sufficiently to appreciate its amplitude. Hardly a subject can be named which is not more or less illustrated in its broad and well-packed pages. Its definitions of biblical and theological words are comprehensive and generally correct.

Cruden's or Butterworth's Concordance should be obtained at the earliest opportunity. Also "Gaston's Collections," or some similar work, presenting a wide range of subjects, and quoting the Scriptures which relate to them. Leaders, exhorters, and even preachers of long experience, will find a small book of this character, called "Seed Thoughts," compiled by the late Rev. George C. Robinson, and printed at our Book Concern, exceedingly convenient. It not only furnishes the most pertinent Scripture texts in support of various doctrines and duties, but many of the best

sayings of great and good men. Then, it is of such size and type, as to render it available on all public occasions.

Though we think too much time is often spent over the *geography* of Bible countries, a small map on your table will help you in maintaining your polarity. It is not essential to salvation to know in what direction Jericho lies from Jerusalem; still, if you are going to refer to *Bible geography* at all, as you will sometimes be obliged to do, it is better to be correct.

2. It is also important to read some good system of *theology*, which is defined by Webster to mean "The science of God and Divine things, or the science which teaches the existence, character, and attributes of God, His laws and government, the doctrines we are to believe, and the duties we are to practice." This brings you *directly* in contact with the subjects that are to engross your life and labors, and in which you feel a profound interest as Christians.

The order of procedure in this department must be largely determined by your necessities and circumstances. You must study to teach,

exhort, or preach immediately, not some years hence ; what, and *as* duty may require. This is according to the common sense which controls in other pursuits. Some would set you to studying Greek and Hebrew, but that is simply ridiculous. Learn the simple, practical, and indispensable things first, and leave others until you get more time and talent.

Purchase the necessary books as fast as you are able, one or two at a time, and read them. But see that you get *good* ones, books that will help you. Spurgeon says to workers with slender apparatus, "Do not buy milk and water, but get condensed milk, and put what water you like to it yourself. Get much in little. Prefer books which abound in what James Hamilton used to call 'Bibline,' or the *essence* of books. You require accurate, condensed, reliable, standard books, and should make sure that you get them. . . . . Forego, without regret, the many books which, like poor Hodge's razors, of famous memory, are made to sell, and do sell those who buy them."

In determining which are the best for you, do not consult literary book worms, but the most practical and successful ministers, who

commenced as you do, and had to learn as they proceeded in their work. They have traversed the ground, and can appreciate your difficulties, and know what you need.

If you are unable to purchase, *borrow.* If this is impracticable, read the few you have and master them. A few solid works, well studied, will benefit you more than many third-rate ones, half read. Says Spurgeon, "In case the famine of books should be sore in the land, there is one book which you all have, and that is your Bible ; and a minister with his Bible is like David with his sling and stone, fully equipped for the fray."

As you have occasion to repeat your sermons, you ought to review your grounds, and appropriate any additional information which you may have acquired. In this way you will necessarily grow in knowledge, grace, and power with God and men. But you should never regard any preparation complete, except for the present occasion. The state of your own mind, and the condition of your hearers may never be the same again. You will know more, and need a wider sweep, or the people may be in a different attitude, and require to be ap-

proached in a different way to be reached and moved.

But you should not restrict yourselves to particular doctrines and duties, but endeavor to comprehend them in their relations to each other, and the grand whole of Christian theology. "Binney's Theological Compend" of the evidences, doctrines, morals, and institutions of Christianity, is an excellent guide to beginners. It will give you a pretty correct view of the subject, and create an appetite for reading "Watson's Institutes," "Knapp's Theology," or some similar work that more fully explains it.

For the want of such a connected view, preachers often run to extremes, representing one doctrine in a manner to eclipse or destroy another. Hence, some have magnified the goodness of God to the exclusion of His justice, human depravity, to the overthrow of human liberty, and the merit of good works to the rejection of grace. The result is, their hearers hardly know what to make of them. In one discourse they seem to be Calvinists, in another, Universalists, and then Methodists, or something else. The fact is, they hold to many truths, but have no connected *system* of doc-

trine to steady them under the excitements of public discourse. And, as some distinguished divines rather boast of their independence in this respect, there is danger that this kind of loose preaching will increase.

We especially advise that you avoid the vain philosophies and speculations of men, which are ever shifting like the sands of the ocean. Many young men have nearly ruined their influence as preachers, by reading the skeptical writings of learned, but unchristian men. Their confidence in the truth as they first received it, has become shaken, and they begin to question the correctness of certain views and practices, generally approved by Christians. So, to furnish their people something new, they open fire on the subject in the pulpit, conceding some things and exploding others, but not satisfying the hunger of the hearers for the Gospel. Their concessions offend the more pious portion of the Church, and their defences fail to interest others, the enemy being too metaphysical, or distant, to be dangerous. Preachers naturally take into the pulpit what they read, think and feel in the study. But these things have no adaptation to ordi-

nary congregations. They are not the Gospel, and the people know little of them, and care less. Nor are they particularly in the way of their salvation.

It is desirable, however, that you read some well-written history of doctrine. Young preachers, who have been educated in correct sentiments, are frequently led astray by erroneous ones. Failing to see their falsity, and wishing, perhaps, to enjoy the credit of independence and depth of thought, they entertain some supposed novelty, to find out afterwards that it was considered and exploded long before they were born. Knapp's Theology is especially useful in this particular, giving, as it does, the history of almost every leading doctrine known to the ages.

The writer's faith was once badly disturbed by an ingenious work put into his youthful hands, by a divinity student at Harvard. It seemed to him both new and unanswerable, and he dropped everything else to settle the question involved. Turning to "Watson's Institutes," which are admirably adapted to such emergencies, he found deliverance at once. The dangerous book was but the republication

of an old heresy in a modern dress, designed to sap the foundation of the Christian faith.

Experimental and practical theology are intimately connected, and involve a proper knowledge of God, His character and disposition toward men,—His will, or system of government, embracing redemption by Christ,—His promises and threatenings,—what He proposes to do for men in this world, and the world to come, and what are our duties and the possibilities of improvement in fidelity, purity and destiny.

These, in a word, are the stirring themes of the ministry, and the closer you keep to them, the more likely will you be to interest the people and do them good. The people care little about theories that can be turned to no practical account. They desire to hear about God, who He is, what are His purposes, how He feels toward them, how they can be happy here, and what are their chances for eternity. These are the vital subjects; the very Gospel you are called to preach. They involve the facts that brought you to Christ, and set you on fire with love to God and good will to men. To think of them, and trace their developments in the Bible, in biographies and other books, reducing

them to practice as far as may be, is the direct way to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the truth, according to the words of Him that hath called you, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." (John vii. 17.)

This suggests how it is that some young ministers who began strong, are now weak and ineffective; they have forsaken these burning truths, and given themselves to abstractions. If a minister will be successful he must live in these themes, and let them live in him, and shine out in his life.

3. You should study the language of the people you are to serve. In going on a mission to nations of other tongues, this is the first duty imposed, and must not be disregarded at home. Errors in speech are expected in beginners, and are readily overlooked, but they are damaging to preachers. A young man who intends to speak in public, should learn to speak correctly. English grammar, that is, its general principles, may be easily acquired. Under a good private teacher, a man of fair capacity may learn the different parts of speech, their import and relations in a few days, so as to speak and write

with tolerable correctness. This may seem a little extravagant, nevertheless it is true, the long and tedious course pursued in some of our grammar schools to the contrary, notwithstanding. And we make the declaration, because so many young men live and die without this knowledge from an over-estimate of the difficulty of obtaining it.

Says Rev. John A. Broadus, D.D., LL.D., "We have to learn the usage of language, and grammars undertake to present this usage, in a systematic and convenient form. They show us our faults, and warn us when there is danger; they set us to observing language, and reflecting upon it. . . . . There are men among us who have studied no such books, nor any other language, and yet who speak and write English with correctness, and even with force and beauty. . . . . Correct habits may be formed, and right principles comprehended, without books of grammar, but more rapidly and surely with them, provided we use them only as helps, and aim to go deeper than they carry us. As to this whole matter of studying English grammar, two practical errors widely prevail, and greatly need to be corrected. Men who

have been to college are apt to think they have no need to study their own language at all, and especially no need of consulting books on the subject; the latter part of this opinion being a mistake, and the former a very great mistake. On the other hand, men who have had fewer educational advantages, are in danger of supposing that without systematic instruction they can do nothing to improve their style, or else, that after studying a book or two on English grammar, they have nothing more to do." (*Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, pp. 328, 329.)

But whatever course you may take with regard to the study of grammar, you should always have a dictionary at hand, and consult it with regard to the meaning and pronunciation of words in all cases of ignorance or doubt, whether they occur in reading or hearing. Careful reading will also help you, and writing and rewriting still more.

We early enjoyed the friendship of one of the ablest fathers and purest writers of forty years ago, a master in preaching and controversy, who obtained high distinction in this way. He wrote poorly at first, but submitting his

productions to a literary friend for correction, he saw his errors and avoided them forever after.

This same divine sought assistance in another direction. Having a friendly educated hearer he enlisted him to note his pulpit errors, and kindly report them to him. This revealed some strange mistakes, which were soon corrected. Thus, by walking with God, reading, writing, conversation and prayer, he became a mighty preacher, author and editor, and won many a field in conflict with the highest literary talent of his age.

4. Other departments of education are important, and come readily within your reach. Intellectual and moral philosophy relate especially to the mind and heart to be addressed; logic and rhetoric indicate the best methods of moving them, while natural philosophy, chemistry, astronomy, etc., reveal the material works of God, and furnish many apt illustrations of spiritual truths. These subjects are now so clearly developed in lectures and in books of moderate size, that no young man, anxious to learn, need remain long without a general understanding of the facts and principles they involve.

History furnishes another valuable source of ministerial endowment, which comes within the grasp of all. Every young man who intends to occupy any useful position, should read some brief history, at least, of his own country, and of his own church, at a very early period in his career. This will be likely to incline him to go further, and compass other histories, ancient and modern, that he may have a better idea of the world which he seeks to reform. Compared with novelistic books, and skeptical monthlies of the day, this kind of reading is *pure gold.* It will add something to your stock of knowledge that may be usefully employed on many occasions.

Christian biographies should not be ignored. They reveal the dealings of God with men, and the experiences of Christians in the different conditions of life, and are profitable for instruction, and encouragement under trials. The best expositions we have of many of the duties and privileges of religious life, are found in this class of books. They answer the purpose of precedents and witnesses for the lawyer, and reports of diseases and their treatment, for the physician.

The study of *human* nature, in its various phases, is indispensable, and demands close attention. Candidates for medical practice are required to study *man* as well as medicine. They need to understand his organism in a healthy state, and as affected by different diseases, in order to prescribe for him wisely in sickness. To our apprehension it is equally necessary for a minister to be acquainted with the intellectual and moral nature to which he is to apply spiritual remedies. Nay, more. People are full ready enough to call a doctor when a little ailing, and swallow his prescriptions without hesitation, but they seldom call a minister until they feel their condition to be terribly alarming. His business is to call *them*, and conquer them by argument and persuasion to abandon their sins and accept of offered mercy. How to approach them, so as to conciliate their favor and command their attention, is often a very nice question. One needs to become acquainted with their prejudices, whims, weaknesses and susceptabilities, as well as their strong points, or he may commit a fatal blunder in his first attempts to approach them.

Here is just where some of our ablest theo-

logians are deficient. It is the secret of their failure. They have seen human nature in its better aspects in schools and colleges, and adapt themselves and their labors to the *few*, and not to the *masses*, and wonder why their congregations are not larger and more interested. The people know that they are not understood, or much esteemed, and stay at home, or go elsewhere.

A young minister may learn much on this subject by looking into his own heart, and asking, if I were in the condition of this people, or that person, what should I think? How should I want the minister to approach me? What kind of treatment or instruction would be most likely to attract and win me? "A man who talks to himself," says Cecil, "will find out what suits the heart of man." Also, what puzzles and distracts the mind. All this is to be avoided. It may wear the garb of deep research, great accumen, and extensive learning, but it is nothing to the mass of mankind. A minister will learn this by going among the people with his eyes and ears open, and drawing them out in conversation.

Much valuable information may be obtained,

too, by consultation with experts, in this department, who are to be found everywhere. Also, by reading the operations of others, who have displayed great power in the management of men. If a man will think as he moves about in society, and take notice of what he usually sees and hears, and consider its import and bearing, he cannot fail to become a master in drawing men to himself, and to God, if he is humble and determined enough to become "all things to all men that he may save some." (1 Cor. ix. 22.)

"Suppose there should come up to one of our great hospitals a young student, so poor, that he could not purchase surgical books ; it would certainly be a great detriment to him ; but if he have the run of the hospital (and be allowed to ask questions), if he saw the operations performed, and watched cases from day to day, I should not wonder but what he might turn out as skillful a surgeon as his more favored companions. His observation would show him what books alone could not ; and as he stood by to see the removal of a limb, the binding up of a wound, or the tying up of an artery, he might, at any rate, pick up enough of practical

surgery to be of immense service to him. . . . . A man who has had a sound practical experience, in the things of God himself, and watched the hearts of his fellows, other things being equal, will be a far more useful man than he who knows only what he has read."—*Spurgeon.*

Preachers should seek to know something with regard to all subjects, and all branches of business. It is not wise, as some seem to think, to be ignorant of *common things.* A popular country parson in New England lost his place by asking one of his parishioners at the tea table, "if he raised the oysters they were eating, on his farm." They ought especially to be well informed on public interests, so that if called to participate in their discussion, they may maintain themselves and the position they shall assume with honor. We have known some to become entangled and defeated by reason of their ignorance of parliamentary order. Others have embarrassed themselves and their people in church discipline, for the want of a proper understanding of our jurisprudence. These subjects are now so fully developed in books, and are so easily com-

prehended, that there is no necessity for ignorance in relation to them.

Young preachers should also learn to *sing*, for two reasons, namely: 1. Singing is one of the best methods of improving the voice, in volume and sweetness. 2. Power to sing well, and lead the singing in religious meetings, is an endowment of the greatest usefulness. It is the wand by which many ministers have worked themselves up to the most desirable and effective pastoral positions. "If it should require," says Dr. Broadus, "as much time and effort to gain the power of singing church music at sight, as to learn a modern language or a branch of science, it would be fully as profitable, and almost any man who is still young *can* learn to sing moderately well, by judicious and persevering effort." (Ibid., p. 453.)

CHAPTER IV.

OF THE SPIRIT, PURPOSE AND MATTER OF PREACHING.

THE object of the Christian ministry, as before stated, is substantially that which brought the Saviour into the world, namely: that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. (Titus ii. 14.) Therefore, any style of moral and religious effort which is adapted to secure these results comes legitimately within the range of its duties. It is a stupendous mistake that the preaching of set sermons is the only, or principal work of ministers. It has led to grievous errors, especially to the neglect of imperative duties, equally necessary to success.

Preachers are "ambassadors for Christ," called to persuade men to be "reconciled to God." (2 Cor. v. 20.) If they can do this by regular sermons, well, if not, they should resort to other means. Comparatively few are converted or developed into mature Christians merely by preaching. Most people require line upon line

and precept upon precept of private instruction and advice, with here a little and there a little of religious influence, for the want of which ordinary preaching, however orthodox, often fails of achieving the desirable results.

To preach the Gospel effectively one must be fully in sympathy with its objects, urging him out on all lines of feeling and action leading to their accomplishment. He who only preaches a sermon or two per week, is not a Gospel preacher in the broadest sense. Preaching with St. Paul embraced all possible activity, however oppressive. "For," said he, "though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews: to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law. To them that are without law, as without law, that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak. I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." (1 Cor. v. 19–22.)

This is undoubtedly the spirit with which a young minister should enter upon his work,

whatever may be his qualifications. If deficient, it will stimulate him to study and pray that he may improve. It will be his delight to imitate the Master "who taught the people from the Scriptures," at such times and places, and by such methods as were best adapted to command their confidence and reform their lives. Thus his preaching will be characterized by variety and adaptation, as old sermons generally are not, and will be illustrated by familiar facts and figures connected with his surroundings.

In this state of mind, begotten by the Holy Ghost, ministers will naturally speak as the Spirit shall give them utterance, as did the apostles on the day of Pentecost. When forbidden by the civil authorities, they did not refrain, but continued speaking in the temple, in courts, prisons and other places, as they could find opportunity. They seem to have had no set sermons, but simply preached as the circumstances of the hour and their objects required. Had they confined themselves to dead issues, it is not likely that the high priests and elders would have been much disturbed.

This is the manner in which our Methodist

fathers commenced and prosecuted their ministry. They were *constrained* to speak of what God had done, and was doing for them, and was ready to do for others. They had little human preparation, and only thought of preaching as they were moved by the Spirit. The Christian Church still retains specimens of this kind of preachers, who are doing excellent service for the cause.

The greatest danger of young ministers is that they will not sufficiently appreciate and cultivate the proper *spirit of their calling.* This is everything. No morality, or intelligence, or eloquence, can supply its place. They need above all things else to be fully absorbed in their work, to burn with intense desire to honor God and save souls from death. They should *feel* all that is expressed in the following breathings :

"I would the precious time redeem,
And longer live for this alone,
To spend and to be spent for them
Who have not yet my Saviour known ;
Fully on these my mission prove,
And only breathe to breathe Thy love.
My talents, gifts and graces, Lord,
Into Thy blessed hands receive ;

And let me live to preach Thy word,
And let me for Thy glory live,
My every sacred moment spend
In publishing the sinner's Friend."

With this spirit there will be little *trifling*, little reading of novels and other works, which are calculated to divert the mind from God and duty, little waste of time in profitless conversation, or in unnecessary *vacations* and amusements. It would produce an instant and thorough revolution in the habits, studies, deportment and preaching of many ministers, who now imagine that they are doing very well.

Dr. J. W. Alexander, speaking of the importance of *entire* devotion to the work, says:

"No man can reach the highest degrees in any calling or profession, who does not admire and love it, and give himself up to it, have his mind full of it, day by day. No great painter ever became such who had it only as a collateral pursuit, or who did not reckon it the greatest of arts, or who did not sacrifice everything else to it . . . . The young minister, who is evidently concentrating his chief thoughts on something other than his ministry, will be a drone if not a Demas. Look at the books on

his table, examine his last ten letters, listen to his conversation, survey his companions; then you will learn what is uppermost in his heart, and if you find it to be poetry, æsthetics, classics, literary appointments, snug settlement, European travel, proximity to the great; be not surprised if you find him ten years hence philandering at soirees, distilling verse among the weaker vessels of small literature, operating in stocks, or growing silent and wealthy upon a plantation.

"It is a source of deep regret to many in review of life, that they have scattered themselves over too many fields; let me entreat you to spend your strength on one." (*Thoughts on Preaching*, p. 68.)

This danger is augmented by the fact that so little importance is given to the subject in our course of study and examination. Preachers are expected to be religious, it is true, and they are so accounted by those who license them. But who fully examines them to find the unutterable yearnings of their hearts after God and souls, which is really the only endowment that can insure power? They are required to say that they have "faith in God," and

believe that they are called to the work, and will endeavor to do it. But what does all this mean? Who thoroughly weighs and measures these terms to see whether they amount to a genuine call of the Holy Ghost? Many of our books are explicit on the subject, and our bishops often inculcate the true doctrine, but where is the close personal examination, which the magnitude of this wonderful inspiration requires

But we *do* prescribe quite a thorough course of study and examination in everything else, as before shown, beginning with the local preachers, and subjecting each to a critical examination *annually*, by committees, elders or bishops, or by all of them, until graduated to elder's orders, and if found wanting in theology, grammar, ecclesiastical jurisprudence, and on other points, they are sometimes dismissed, or given a further trial. This would seem as though we attached more importance to education than to a *proper mind* for the work, which we know is not the meaning of the Church ; but is it not liable to be so construed, and thus throw the grand element of ministerial efficiency into the shade ?

I have emphasized this subject to guard our

young men against a fatal delusion, and thus impress them with the unspeakable importance of *spiritual* endowments. The first question proposed in our Discipline to those who think they are divinely called to preach, is, "*Do* they know God as a *pardoning* God?" Not, were they once converted, but are they now converted? Then follows this: "*Have* they the love of God *abiding* in them? Do they desire nothing but God? and are they *holy* in *all manner of conversation?* . . . . Have they FRUIT? Are any truly convinced of sin and converted to God, by their preaching?" Young men thus in love with God and consecrated to the work of the ministry, will watch every opportunity to honor Him and do good to men. Not in the pulpit only, but out of it.

OF WHAT TO PREACH.

To preach the gospel as generally understood is to proclaim the good news of the atonement made by Christ for sinners, and to persuade them to accept it. "As ye go preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt. x. 7.)

This involves many things. The particular

aspect of the general subject most appropriate to be presented at a given time, depends on the circumstances. The grand issue at the first was, "is Jesus the promised Messiah?" The Jews denied it, and pronounced him an impostor. This rendered it necessary for the apostles to furnish the evidence by which His claims were sustained. Hence their frequent reference to the prophecies concerning Him, His birth, character, miracles, etc. Peter's argument on the day of Pentecost was a strong specimen of apostolic preaching, and was so mightily convincing that many cried out, saying, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts ii. 14–37.)

Paul found it needful afterwards to preach against salvation by the merit of works taught by the Scribes and Pharisees, and show it to be of *grace*, and not by the merit of works at all. At other times, when in conflict with Saducees, he passed these points, to prove the *resurrection* of the dead. In determining exactly what to preach at any particular time and place, it is desirable to know something of the condition of the people, what fatal errors of sentiment and practice prevail among them and obstruct our object, that we may not waste time on irrevelent

questions. When this is impracticable it is wise to present fundamental truths, adapted to all communities, that cannot be accepted without benefit, or rejected without loss. The discussion of subjects which have little or no bearing upon the people, is generally useless, and seldom interesting.

By aiming directly at *practical results*, that is, to save the people, and studying their condition to ascertain what views of truth are best calculated to command their attention and move their hearts, young ministers will not find it very difficult to determine what train of thought to present. For instance :—1. Suppose they come to a congregation that is dead in trespasses and sins, it is easy to see that they must awaken them to thought and feeling. The natural way of doing this is to present the law, showing what God requires, and what will be the result of persistent rebellion. By holding up this glass before them, they will be likely to see their defects and danger, and become interested in knowing *how* they may be saved. The guilt of the sinner must be established before he can appreciate the provisions of the Gospel. There is little use in magnifying the Saviour

until you have found a sinner. The whole have no need of a physician, or the innocent of pardon.

And here is one point where we think modern preaching is defective. It leaves the law of God, with its terrible penalties, largely out of sight, and offers the benefits of the Gospel on inadequate terms, amounting often to little more than an intellectual acceptance of the atonement, without proper repentance or reformation. Jesus and His apostles preached the *terrors* of the law, and so do all successful ministers. Others sometimes draw crowds, but they neither awaken or convert them. The natural heart is averse to God, and will submit to His will only to escape "the wrath to come." The hearers must be made to *see* that "wrath," not as *man* would have it, but as *God* has revealed it. If it amounts to nothing, then the whole Gospel scheme is a mammoth fraud.

As to the *manner* of preaching the law, I will only say, that it should be done plainly and earnestly, but in a tender and sympathizing spirit, indicating more of grief and concern than gratification. Sinners, as one confessed on hearing a sermon of the kind from a weeping broth-

er, "don't mind being doomed in this way, if the preacher is only *sorry* about it." Harsh, and vindictive declarations of these awful truths are seldom if ever expedient.

The first business of an "*ambassador*" to a rebellious province is, to declare and maintain the claims of his sovereign, and make the people see their wickedness and folly. He may then induce them to accept terms of reconciliation, and return to loyalty. We are sorry to know that some ministers of acknowledged piety, take quite a different course. Mr. Varley, in his late visit to this country, told his hearers, in so many words, that "the law of God was not made to be kept,"—that they had only to accept Christ's "finished salvation," then and there, and all would be well, thus excluding repentance, and making religion to consist in the mental acceptance of a mere dogma.

2. When addressing a people who admit the fact and guilt of sin, but claim that human destinies are so fixed by the decrees of God, that they can do nothing to improve their condition, another line of thought is suggested. Hence our early Methodist preachers in this country grappled fatalism, and proved the universality

of the atonement and the possibility of salvation to every sinner. Adaptation is an element of power, and often atones for serious defects in other particulars. It is sure to attract attention.

3. Our advice to young preachers is, therefore, to teach those truths which have special application to their hearers, and directly tend to bring them to God. *They* care little about theories or opinions that have no influence on the heart and life, such as evolution, and other speculative follies that reform no sinner, and comfort no saint. The people are generally practical, and incline to subjects which they can understand and turn to good account.

Furthermore, we advise that you preach to the whole congregation. Many make the mistake of preaching *to* and *for* a select few of the more intelligent hearers, and fail to interest the masses. The result is, generally, that neither class is satisfied, and the cause suffers. Many are in just this condition to-day, and do not know what is the matter. If they would throw their whole souls into the work and preach vital truths "to save some," they would become effective and popular. Preaching about

nothing, or of ancient or absent sinners, is not likely to be very interesting. People go to church to hear of themselves, their condition, duty and destiny, and will not respect a preacher who has not the courage to speak out.

But do not confine yourself to a single theme. Paul knew the "terror of the Lord," and preached it, but not always. He preached human depravity, the atonement, justification by faith, holiness of heart and life, the resurection of the body, the final judgment, and everlasting rewards and punishments. The Gospel harp is one of many strings, and all are necessary to complete harmony. Those who employ only a few of them, will not achieve the highest merit. And that some err in this particular is well known. Let it be announced that Mr. A. is to preach where he is well known, and it will be said, "Now we shall have hell." Mr. B. runs on heaven; Mr. C. on holiness, and Mr. E. on the prophecies, to persuade the people of the coming of some strange event, which God has not clearly revealed. If this class of preachers would furnish a greater variety of saving subjects, it would be more profitable.

This policy will aid preachers, also,

IN THE SELECTION OF TEXTS.

Homiletical writers have said much on this subject, to the effect:

1. That a text is not positively necessary to a sermon, a sermon being a religious discourse, whether prefaced by a text or not.

2. That the practice of preaching on particular passages of Scripture is one of ancient origin, and is worthy of being maintained, unless it be carried to excess, and become a yoke of bondage. Ministers are sometimes suddenly called to preach when they have no time to select a suitable text for the subject, which they deem appropriate to the occasion. In such cases they should have independence enough to proceed without one. But this liberty is not designed to justify the practice of substituting mere *lectures* for sermons, which have little to do with the Scriptures, or religion itself. They are not sermons, and ought not to be so called.

The arguments urged in favor of employing a text are: 1. To recognize the word of God as the great theme of Christian preaching

2. That it furnishes a solid basis of instruction. 3. That it tends to *variety* in preaching. 4. That it aids the memory of the hearer. It may be added, that it often helps the memory of the extemporaneous preacher, as well; and what is better, it gives a sort of divine authority to the positions he assumes. It is a great thing for a preacher to start off with "Thus saith the Lord," for the doctrines and duties that he is about to inculcate.

3. It is also claimed that great care should be taken in the selection of texts. This is too obvious to need confirmation. Some preachers seem to have a special gift in this direction, and it has added much to their reputation.

The methods proposed for selecting texts are summed up in the few words of the pious Thomas Spencer, of Liverpool. A friend asked him "How do you select your texts?" He replied, "I keep a little book in which I enter every text of Scripture which comes to my mind with power and sweetness. Were I to dream of a passage of Scripture, I should enter it, and when I sit down to compose, I look over the book, and have never found myself at a loss for a subject." It may be well to note

down, also, the *thoughts* which give such texts their particular "sweetness."

But this must not be carried too far, or preachers will find themselves preparing their sermons for the sake of having something original and nice, rather than appropriate and powerful.

4. It is generally admitted, too, by the best writers on the subject, that the text should mean something in and of itself. Texts which require a long introduction to give them any fair show of relationship to the subject to be presented, are embarrassing. It is better to select one that announces the subject clearly and forcibly, and needs little explanation.

The use of a single word as a motto, such as "so," "if," "now," or "wherefore," is still more objectionable. "The ignorant and childish," says one writer, "may be struck with admiration of the preacher's talent who can make a sermon out of so little; but the more sturdy and intelligent will be grieved that God's word is so little honored."

Young preachers, especially, should choose texts long enough, and broad enough to furnish them ample scope for the time they propose to

occupy, and thus prevent the necessity of spinning their thread too fine. Where there is much time for study, and some fear of running short of subjects, they sometimes spread out a little truth over a large surface; in other words, preach a less sermon now, to provide for a possible emergency that may occur. This is a temptation. They should do their best for God and the people, every time, and trust Providence for the future. The pastor who preached fifteen sermons on repentance lost his labor, while he who preached one from an overflowing heart, and with streaming eyes, brought many to God.

5. Odd texts should seldom be used. They indicate frivolity in the preacher, and create a prejudice which may never be overcome. To avoid these results, as well as for other reasons, you should,

6. Select texts embracing fundamental truth, such as repentance, faith, redemption, regeneration, sanctification, the resurrection, judgment, heaven, hell, and the like. "Preach on great subjects," says the pious Dr. J. W. Alexander; "such as move the feelings; the great questions which have agitated the world, which

agitate our own bosoms, which we should like to have settled before we die, which we should ask an apostle about, if he were here. These are to general Scripture truth, what great mountains are in geography. Some, anxious to avoid hackneyed topics, omit the greatest; just as if we were to describe Switzerland, and omit the Alps."

And we would add, preach them, not to explain them away, or to tone them down, but to urge them upon the acceptance of the people. Use them as mighty arguments for immediate repentance and holiness. And do it in a way that your hearers shall see that you believe them in your heart of hearts, and expect that they will be lost unless they fly to the strong holds for refuge.

It is not always easy to find a satisfactory text or subject. Young preachers should be upon the alert for both, like bees for honey, or a loving father, to obtain bread for his children. In this way they will often find them in preaching, or in retiring from the pulpit, possibly in walking, or conversation. And not unfrequently they will spring upon them in swarms, so that they cannot see how they will ever get

through with them. Yet, such is the instability of clerical experience, in a month, or less, they may be pinched with famine, and be obliged to enter the pulpit, in doubt as to what they will preach. But fortunately for us, God is good, and often turns our poverty to good account for the people.

From what has been said, it will appear that we believe in doctrinal preaching. Preaching means not only to publish and proclaim the truth, but to explain and defend it against all opposition that actually obstructs its acceptance. But there is a style of doctrinal preaching, and a vast amount of argumentation in the pulpit, that is of little advantage to the cause of God, if not a positive injury. At least it occupies time, talent and opportunities, which might be better improved.

Ministers often preach against Universalism and infidelity, when their people are really as orthodox as themselves. They would do better to urge them to *act* on their own fears, or settled convictions. Then, they sometimes discuss unimportant theological points about which good men are divided. They may be accepted without benefit, or rejected without damage. Much

time has been wasted, too, over the prophecies, to make them subserve some favorite theory. There is no end to the variety of worthless subjects that have been forced into the pulpit, to supplant the Gospel. If ministers sometimes succeed in displaying considerable ability on these lines, they never fail to show their own spiritual emptiness.

God save us from such folly. Let us preach *saving* truth every time, so that if it shall prove to be the last sermon the people shall ever hear, it may be sufficient to guide them to Christ.

CHAPTER V.

OF THE CONSTRUCTION AND COMPOSITION OF SERMONS.

THE word "sermon" is derived from the word *sermo*, a speech; and is generally understood to mean a serious discourse, delivered in public, founded on the word of God.

Many valuable suggestions have been published on the construction and composition of sermons, but most of them apply to *written* sermons, and educated men, and therefore, are ill adapted to those who enter the ministry with limited preparation, and propose to preach extemporaneously. It is for this reason that most books of homilectics fail to meet the wants of the class of ministers for which we especially write. They aim more at *literary* perfection, than at spiritual results.

Sermons may be divided into the three following classes, mamely: Topical, Textual, and Expository. In the first, the text merely suggests the topic and retires, leaving the preacher

to treat it as he would if he had no text. This form has some advantages, and is liable to many abuses. Some pastors would hardly be taken for preachers of the Gospel, if they did not preface their discourses with a text.

A *Textual* sermon is one whose subject or subjects are suggested by the text, and flow directly from it. It may assume general and subordinate divisions, or a series of remarks, but in either case the text is made prominent. This is an ancient and common form, and it is the best for many subjects and occasions.

Expository sermons are chiefly occupied with the exposition of Scripture. Dr. Alexander recommends *this* method, on the following grounds: 1. That it better corresponds with the idea and design of preaching. 2. It is the primitive method. 3. It insures a better knowledge of the Scriptures. 4. It causes sermons to contain more of Scripture truths, and Scriptural modes of viewing things. 5. It gives occasion for remarking on many passages of the Bible, which otherwise might never enter into one's sermon. 6. It greatly diminishes the temptation to misinterpret texts by excessive allegorizing, accommodation, etc.

This is the plan which Ezra wisely adopted on one great occasion, and carried into effect with powerful results, as follows: "So they read in the book of law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them (the people) to understand the reading." (Neh. viii. 8.)

Each of these methods will be employed by thoughtful preachers, as the state of their minds and other circumstances require. By using all of them, one avoids *sameness*, which is a prevalent defect with preachers who confine themselves to either.

Of the construction of sermons, the celebrated Rev. John Claude, says, that "in general, there are five parts of a sermon, the exordium (or introduction), the connection, the division, the discussion and the application." Also "that a sermon 'must' explain the text, and give the entire sense of the whole text." But we doubt the propriety of tying a preacher up by these rules. In a topical sermon, the explanation and connection are often unnecessary; and division, in one of an expository character, is frequently difficult, if not impossible. Much time has been wasted in vainly trying to conform to arbitrary rules. We cannot subordi-

nate all minds and all texts to the same order. Each preacher must be left to his own aptitudes, and being so, he will naturally prepare something to say, and determine how to introduce, and apply it, which, in the delivery, will present:

1. An introduction to the main subject.
2. A proper discussion of that subject. And,
3. An application of it to the objects contemplated.

These general divisions may have several sub-divisions, more or less, according to circumstances. They may be announced or not, as shall be deemed expedient. In some cases it is better to announce them, because it will give clearness and force to the sermon.

But each sermon should have a complete plan of its own, reaching from beginning to end. Too many preach without such a plan, while others plan too much. Some lay themselves out on one part, and leave other parts to the inspiration of the occasion. The result is, we sometimes hear a grand introduction to a feeble and disorderly discussion, with a conclusion which seems little related to either, perhaps better, possibly worse.

OF THE NATURAL ORDER OF CONSTRUCTION.

The natural order of constructing a sermon is about as follows:

1. Determine on the special *object* to be secured. No man should attempt to preach without aiming at some definite and immediate result. And we think few do so, though it is to be feared that the aims of many are unworthy of their profession. At all events, we hear sermons from men who are accounted evangelical, to say nothing of others, which fail to indicate any purpose to convert men to God, or build them up in holiness. They relate more to matters of curiosity, which may or may not be as assumed by the preacher, without effecting any important point of faith, or godliness. This, to our apprehension, is trifling with God and with men, with time and eternity. It is an indirect way of saying, that the tremendous doctrines of the Bible, and the objects of the ministry, are a mere farce.

A minister who is properly impressed with his responsibility, can but inquire what is the next particular object to be achieved. It may be one thing or another, but in his judgment it

must have an important bearing on the salvation of his hearers. This settled,

2. He will naturally inquire, what particular truth or subject is best calculated, under the circumstances, to effect that object? This question may be very easily answered, or it may require much thought and prayer, and then even be left in doubt. But having determined on the subject, he will ask :

3. What views of it are most likely to be effective? Having determined this,

4. He will next select a text which presents the exact point that he proposes to enforce.

5. He is now prepared to put his principles, arguments, facts, observations, etc., into shape, to give them the greatest possible force. In some discourses, one part requires argument, another, illustrations, and another, facts, according to the nature of the subject.

But the plan should be complete in the mind of the designer, like the plan of a building, which embraces the flooring, studding and ornamentation even, as well as the sills, beams, and posts, but always subject to alterations in the delivery. And it should be arranged with careful consideration of your means of complet-

ing the undertaking in a workman-like manner. Ministers sometimes make their plans too elaborate, and exhaust their thoughts, if not their hearers, before they do their skeletons.

6. Having arranged the principal part of the discourse, the next question relates to the manner of approaching it. Very much depends on a happy introduction. Many begin too far away from their main point, and flounder about in trying to make a graceful connection. They run aground in getting out of port, and forfeit the confidence and attention of their hearers, before they fairly begin. This is a grievous mistake. If the preacher is conscious of striking the right note here, and has traversed the other parts of his work, he will be likely to have a free time and win his case. If he stumbles at this point, it will be difficult for him to rally. There is more than a joke in the remark of the good woman, who went to hear the celebrated John Howe. Having occupied an hour with his introduction, she said, "The dear good man was so long in laying the cloth, I lost my appetite."

The introduction, therefore, should be ar-

ranged with special care, though it may be brief. Indeed, it should seldom be long, but always terse, strong and interesting. And to make it so, is often difficult, as a portico to a house requires more skill than the main building. Yet, as a matter of fact, it is frequently left to extemporaneous suggestion.

7. The last thing to be provided for, is the conclusion, which is the most important, and yet the most likely to be omitted in the plan, trusting to the excitement of the hour. But this is sometimes wanting. Preachers should, therefore, arrange a line of thought for the occasion, lest their expected inspiration should fail them. Should something better occur in the delivery, they will, of course, adopt it, not being fettered by a manuscript.

The greatest orators make special provision for their closing appeals. Lord Brougham wrote the conclusion of his famous defence of Queen Caroline *twenty times*, at least. Conclusions should not only be practical and affecting, but the natural outcome of the preceding discussion, the crowning effort of the hour. It may take the form of inference, reflection, application, or entreaty, but in every case it

should indicate the real object of the discourse, and flow from a feeling heart.

Affectation of feeling, however, is usually a failure. The people readily see the deception, and are disgusted. So, the repetition of what has been said, to fill out the time, is worse than nothing. The best thing for a preacher when his thought and feeling are exhausted, is to close. The longer he shall continue in such a dilemma, the worse it will be for his hearers and his cause.

This state of things is often the result of careless preparation, but not always. Preachers sometimes unaccountably fail where they have done their best to succeed. We have known them to toil and weep in their preparation, and seemingly fail in the delivery. What appeared clear in the study, became cloudy in the pulpit, and they were left to worry through without light or emotion. But it is a pleasure to *merit* success, whether we achieve it or not. We sometimes, however, do better than we anticipate. God inspires and carries us above and beyond our best arrangements, and is more likely to do so when we fully prepare ourselves, and seek His blessing.

The importance of a right conclusion, we repeat, cannot be over-estimated. It is desirable that the people leave the place under a powerful impression. To this end, the largest rational liberty is admissible. You may appeal to different classes, parents, children, saints and sinners, and urge your plea by Scripture promises and threatenings, by facts and experience, by exhortation and entreaty.

The plan we suggest should embrace sufficient facts, arguments, and illustrations, to sustain each proposition, should nothing new occur while speaking; and should be so fully memorized as to supersede the necessity of notes. This will not be difficult if they are the natural suggestions of the text and its surroundings. These will serve as prompters at every step of your progress. To be obliged to stop and consult notes, is always damaging to the effect, especially in a congregation accustomed to extemporaneous preaching. It embarrasses the preacher, and diverts the attention of the hearers. Your plan had better embrace so few points, that you cannot forget them, rather be so complicated as to overtax your memory, or require much reading.

These principles apply with equal force to addresses. When there is opportunity, you should determine what to say, and arrange for saying it, in the most natural and forcible manner.

The reason why some able preachers are poor platform speakers is, that they do not prepare themselves. Feeling little inclined to that style of address, and less faith in their ability, they get excused, if possible, or respond to honorable calls apologetically or jocosely, rather than think out something worthy of the occasion. This is no way to become ready and able speakers, and many powerful preachers damage their influence by adopting it. A man who can preach an interesting sermon, can make a good speech, if he will take the necessary time to prepare for it.

But as important as a good plan is, it does not insure an effective sermon. Some preachers have a wonderful faculty for working up plans. They read sketches, and note down others from the lips of their brethren, but show very conclusively, when they attempt to preach, that they are embarrassed. They have the bones of good sermons, but not the flesh and blood that

originally belonged to them. This is poor policy. Preachers, however young, had better make their own plans, just such as they can fill up with living matter. Indeed, if they will live in the Spirit, and preach what the people need, their plans will hardly need making,—they will often appear to them like heavenly apparitions. At any rate, they can preach better on their own plans, poor as they may be, than on those made by others, however excellent.

But in this arrangement, you should have an eye to the length of time to be devoted to the delivery. It is difficult to cut down an hour sermon to forty minutes in the pulpit, and preachers are seldom satisfied when they have exhausted their time on the main body of the discourse, and have none left for the application. We oftener fail by undertaking to say too much, than too little. A few vital points, clearly stated, and faithfully applied, in forty minutes, are generally more useful than a larger number, which occupy an hour. Preachers can hardly appreciate the difficulties under which many attend church, or the importance of their reaching home at the time proposed.

They should lay their plans, so as to allow of an appropriate close to the sermon, and service, without hurry or confusion.

But we should not dismiss the subject of constructing sermons, without, at least, a bare reference to *climaxes*. Some preachers fail to command attention because they move gently along, like a sluggish stream, or stormily, like a cataract—it makes little difference which, and thus lull the people to sleep. They are too *regular*. A sudden stop or diversion,—the repression of the voice to a whisper, or its elevation to unusual strength, would afford sensible relief; but they go straight through with little variation, and end about as they began. To use a figure of Dr. Emmons's, "they are like Seekonk plain, long and level." Others provide something extra at the close, and make no climax until they approach that point.

But the better way of preparing a sermon or speech, is to provide for several passages of special interest and elevation in the body of the discourse. This may be done by the introduction of a pertinent fact or appeal. Some popular speakers would be dry enough, but for this peculiarity of their method. Without seeming

to digress, they extort smiles, tears, or both, in every department of their discourses, and are, therefore, heard with pleasure and profit. Here is where *surprises* are often employed with grand effect; but it is a point of considerable danger. We can pay too dearly for attention, and not a few do so, to the damage of their personal influence, and the cause they would promote.

OF THE COMPOSITION OF SERMONS.

We have presented this brief outline with the view of stimulating public speakers to think for themselves, and make their own plans. If they will do this, they will never be caught in Saul's armor, and it will save them a world of mortification. A few suggestions on the composition of sermons may be useful.

1. In going through your plan, study each point in the light of the best helps within your reach. Your first question should be, what does the Bible say on the subject? Then, consult your commentary, for notwithstanding all that has been written against the use of commentaries, we have more confidence in some of them, than in the opinions of most young

men of the highest culture. In this way read yourself full of divine knowledge and inspiration.

Dr. Shedd beautifully says, "We are to feed on the word of God as the bee feeds on flowers, till every cell is full, and then dispense its sweetness." We would apply the same remark to other books of wise and pious men. They furnish useful material for the pulpit, that would not occur to ordinary minds. By this process you will accumulate a fund of information that will serve you on other occasions. Like wholesome food which you eat, it will become your own—a part of yourselves. It was in this way that Dr. Adam Clarke grew from a dull, ignorant youth, to such fullness that he was able to deliver masterly sermons without taking time for preparation.

The course here recommended will save young and timid speakers from one fruitful source of embarrassment, namely, the fear that their positions are not well taken. Having deliberately tested every point by acknowledged authorities, they can speak with confidence.

But I would not restrict you to what you can find in books. Every-day life throngs with

incidents illustrative of Christian principles, which you may turn to admirable account. These are generally more interesting to the common people, because better understood, than those which are gathered from afar. For instance, a devout farmer speaking lately of his pleasure and success in prayer, compared himself to one sitting under a tree laded with ripe fruit, and receiving an ample supply by simply rapping the body of it with his hand. Another brother of the same occupation, and in the same meeting, illustrated the superiority of the higher life, which he enjoyed, by referring to the fact that he had purchased a self-feeding stove to take the place of his old heater, and found that it would keep up a regular fire all winter, with less trouble, less dust, and less coal. The impression made by these illustrations was all that could be desired. We recognized the tree, for we had seen it, and had enjoyed the genial influence of the stove, and could not fail to see their pertinency as illustrations of the subjects to which they were applied. Nothing from Plutarch could have been so appropriate.

Nor, should you allow the flings of misguided

brethren at what are called *anecdotes,* to divert you from their use, whenever you see that they will serve your purpose. They are nothing more than so many Providential facts, and may be as legitimately used in illustration of doctrines, duties, benefits or dangers, as the facts recorded in the Bible. Jesus effectually employed them in His ministry, and His followers cannot be true to their calling, if they discard them. But you should not make them your chief "stock in trade." They may be used to excess, and be substituted for the word of God, or for solid instruction in divine things.

Your own experience is equally admissible. Ministers are *witnesses* as well as preachers and teachers. "Rise and stand upon thy feet," said Jesus to Saul of Tarsus, "for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a *witness,* both of these things which thou hast seen [in his miraculous arrest and conversion], and of those things in which I will appear unto thee,"—his subsequent experience. Ministers test many of the promises of God, and find them true. They know repentance, justification, sanctification, the witness of the Spirit, and the joy of salvation, by posi-

tive, personal experience. Why should they not testify to these things, and the processes of their attainment? Many of them have been observant of the experience of these great possibilities in others, and are as well satisfied of their reality, as they are of the existence of sin. Why should they not testify to what they have "seen and heard" in these particulars? The enemies of religion would crowd them from the witness's box, but they must not be allowed to do it. Standing well with your hearers for ability, sincerity, and veracity, your testimony will often be of the utmost importance, and may intensify and grace a sermon better than anything else at your command. People are generally interested in experience, and will go further to hear one, than to hear any other style of discourse.

But in all these cases you should scrupulously avoid everything that savors of vulgarity, profanity, or indelicacy. Illustrations tinctured with these qualities, are never suitable for the pulpit, however they may hit the point involved. They leave an enduring stain upon the preacher and his subject. Facts and remarks, too, which are calculated to excite a

smile at the expense of religion and religious people, should be entirely abjured. Wicked men will retail them sufficiently, without our help. Ministers who indulge in such sport, are justly suspected of courting evil-minded men, and of being more in fellowship with the world than the church. Not that we object to a smile. It is more natural to smile than to cry, and is as innocent under proper circumstances.

You should also have an eye to *style* in your preparation. However perfect may be your taste, or vast your capabilities with regard to language and composition, as an honest man, you are bound to lay them at the feet of Jesus, and adopt that style which is best calculated to secure the proper ends of preaching. You should neither be so low and coarse as to disgust, or so refined and classical, as to be incomprehensible or unimpressive. Says Dr. Kidder, "Whoever makes the sermon an occasion for displaying fine language rather than exhibiting truth;—for pleasing the ears and cultivating the taste of an audience, rather than convincing their judgment and moving their hearts, radically mistakes the design of preaching, or

wrongly seeks to pervert an appointed means of doing good into an agency for securing applause. He preaches himself, or his own contrivings, and not Christ Jesus the Lord." And this may be as true, perhaps, of those who, through idleness, preach in a reckless and slovenly style.

The object of language being to indicate our meaning, and not to *conceal* it, and that for the instruction, conviction, and moral purification of the people, it should be such as they can readily understand. "I thank my God," says St. Paul, "I speak with tongues more than ye all." And yet for the sake of the cause, he denied himself the honor of displaying his superior intelligence, saying, "I will pray with the Spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also. . . . Else when thou shalt bless with the Spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say amen, at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest." (1 Cor. xiv. 15, 16.) This is common sense, and stands approved by preachers generally, not excepting some who indulge in the highest floridity and bombast. Says Dr. Cuyler, a distinguished authority:

"If in my study I wrote the word 'avocations,' when I come to preach, I say 'business;' and if I wrote 'this commercial metropolis,' I shorten it into 'this great city,' and never, either in writing or speaking, do I use too fashionable words, so puzzling to the common people, as 'objective and subjective.'" And he adds, "Always preach to the plainest part of your audience. If you elaborate your discourse for the most cultivated portion, they alone can understand you. But if you have the rich man in your church, and also his coachman, or gardener, or servant, then preach to the coachman and gardener, and you will sweep the whole audience to the door. Even the most cultivated lawyer or collegian will be best pleased with *simplicity* and *earnestness*. The profoundest men do not come to church to have their brains taxed, but to have their hearts made holier, and their lives made better. . . . If a minister can only convince his congregation during the first five minutes, that he cares for nothing but *to save their souls*, he will kill all the critics in the house."

The preachers particularly contemplated by this writing, are not as liable, perhaps, to fall

into the mistake suggested, as others of higher literary attainments; but they are sometimes tempted. We advise them therefore:

1. To use plain language, the language of the people. If in your meditations, a difficult word occurs to you, examine the dictionary to ascertain its exact meaning, and then *reject* it in favor of one that the *people* cannot fail to understand. *Big* words are promptly forgotten, *strong* ones will be remembered.

2. Learn to speak in short sentences, embracing declarations, questions, exclamations, apostrophe, etc. If you apply your different points as you proceed, you will find ample scope for all these styles of address.

3. Use no dead or foreign language. This is the uniform advice of our strongest advocates of preparatory education. While they would urge candidates to study Latin, Greek, Hebrew, etc., they wisely insist on their keeping them out of the pulpit, except on some very rare occasions. This is especially important with preachers who have only a slight knowledge of them, for they will often reveal their ignorance to literary hearers by their very first utterance, as the Ephraimites exposed the falsity of

their pretensions and lost their lives, by failing to pronounce *Shibboleth* correctly. (Judges xii. 6.)

4. Avoid, especially, all words of the meaning of which you are in doubt. By not doing so, preachers sometimes make sad mistakes, and expose the defect they seek to conceal.

By observing these rules, you will acquire a good style, though you may not write a line. But writing will help you. Says Lord Bacon, "Reading makes a full man; conference [or speaking] a ready man; and writing an exact [or correct] man." Writing a sermon before preaching it embarrasses some ministers in its delivery. Though they do not attempt to memorize it, the mind involuntarily labors to recall its language, and failing to do so, becomes unfruitful. Such ministers do better to think and preach first, and write afterwards. The less you write, and the more you think, preparatory to preaching, the readier and easier speakers you will become. Write for *correction* and improvement in style, preach for *effect*.

SERMONS TO BE TESTED.

But no sermon should be taken into the pul-

pit until it has been *tested* in private, except in cases of emergency. The way to do this is to preach it to yourself, or to the congregation, as you imagine it will appear before you. By going through it in this manner, you will see its defects, and correct them. We are often fascinated at first with words or illustrations which, on further consideration, we see cause to reject. Besides, better ones often occur, that will stand the test of our final review.

And be not content with one rehearsal. If time permit, try it again and again. If Lord Brougham could write the conclusion of one of his speeches more than "*twenty times*," it is not unreasonable that preachers should review their sermons sufficiently to have them right and ready.

Some make and preach their sermons mentally, before they write a line, and then only write the merest outline, barely hinting at the main points. When they have occasion to repeat them, they go through them as at first, and adapt them to existing circumstances. Thus, they keep them fresh, which is of no small importance. When a preacher ceases to be interested in his own sermons, he had better

ter abandon them, however good, and begin anew.

CHAPTER VI.

OF THE DELIVERY OF SERMONS, AS TO DIFFERENT METHODS AND A PROPER STATE OF MIND.

THERE are three methods of delivering sermons in common use, namely, reading, recitation, and extemporaneous speaking. We might add a fourth, for some read in part and extemporize the rest.

We object to reading,

1. That it is inconsistent with the example and teaching of Christ and His apostles. So far as appears, they neither read sermons, or encouraged the practice in others.

2. That it is not adapted to attract attention, or produce the impression required. "Read to me," says one, "and I will soon be asleep ; *talk*, and I will hear you." Conversational preachers have little trouble with inattentive hearers. Still, it must be conceded that

some very able and successful preachers read their sermons. They are by nature or education, admirable readers, but awkward speakers. In fact they read without seeming to do so, and address the people as though they were extemporizing. But this is a rare gift. Most readers are obliged to attend closely to their manuscript, and are lost the moment their eyes wander. Dr. Chalmers wrote every word of his sermons, and delivered them as if they were the present creations of divine inspiration.

3. It unfits a preacher for emergencies. Accustomed to think in his study, with a pen in his hand, and read in public only what he has previously written, he cannot take advantage of circumstances. He has to postpone to write, and by the time he gets ready, the interest is gone.

4. It is a hindrance to ministerial improvement. As a general rule, sermons once written undergo little modification, though the writer and his surroundings change. Writing, therefore, while it necessitates application in the outset, tends to indolence afterwards.

5. It is a fatal hindrance to free and easy extemporizing, as all artificial dependencies

are to children in learning to walk. "Radically erroneous are those systems of instruction, which postpone efforts at actual speaking until the close of a course of professional study, and then teach the young preacher to confine himself to his manuscript until he gradually acquires confidence to speak extemporaneously. Youth is nature's time for learning to speak, whether in private or public ; and any preacher who does not cultivate freedom of utterance, in fact, who does not acquire a mastery of spoken language in early life, will strive in vain for it in later years." (*Kidder's Homiletics*, p. 343.) This is the published sentiment of acknowledged masters the world over, and it is the verdict of reason and common practice in other respects. A man becomes a workman by working, and a speaker by speaking.

The second method, recitation, is too laborious for most minds. Few will adopt it for the want of verbal memory, if for no other reason ; and they will be readily detected, and lose the advantage of being believed to express their own present thoughts and feelings on the subject. And, preaching only a few sermons in this way, and those of a higher literary order

than usual, they are generally suspected of plagiarism, and lose more than they gain.

All our suggestions with regard to preparation relate to extemporaneous delivery. This term, as we use it, admits of the most thorough arrangement which leaves the language, with new thoughts and illustrations, to the promptings of the Spirit and the occasion. It does not exclude even a brief written outline, though that had better be left at home, or the reading of figures or necessary quotations too extended to be memorized. It relates particularly to the *language, voice* and *action* of the preacher in presenting his message to the people. In this sense, it is of the highest importance to the result. Demosthenes has the credit of saying, that "the first thing, second thing, third thing, in speaking, is delivery." Not that he undervalued the importance of having something to say, and of having it properly arranged, for no man prepared more carefully in this respect. His idea was that the success of the argument depends very largely on the *manner* of its presentation, which is truer of preaching, perhaps, than of other forms of discourse.

The advantages of extemporaneous preaching are many, a few of which are as follows :

1. It facilitates rapid thinking while speaking. We are creatures of habit. A *writer* thinks best in his study. His mental machinery works slowly, only fast enough to keep pace with his pen. An extemporizer thinks better and faster on his feet, and before a congregation, and often feels compelled to abandon the best thoughts of his study for newer and better ones which occur to him in preaching.

Whitefield wrote some, but never so well as he extemporized. Southey says, "His salient points of oratory were not prepared passages ; they were the bursts of passion, like the jets of a geyser, when the spring is in full play." Professor Broadus says, "Any man who possesses, even in an humble degree, the fervid oratorical nature, will find that after careful preparation, some of the noblest and most inspiring thoughts he ever gains will come while he is engaged in speaking."

2. It secures better sermons, especially where one is pressed for time, and is in a hurry. He can give all his time to the thought, whereas in writing, it has to be largely devoted to the

language. Dr. Wayland recognizes this fact, and urges it in favor of extemporary preaching.

3. It saves time for reading and other duties. The sermon reader requires most of his time for writing, and needs to be in his study. The extemporizer is *always* in his study, and never more so than when visiting his people. His best sermons originate, and are considerably prepared, while engaged in his pastoral and other work. A preacher who has once acquired a pure, easy and forcible style of expressing what he knows or believes, in a public assembly, is remarkably endowed for his work. It is better for him than to know all the languages in the universe. Determining what ought to be said, he is ready to say it in an interesting manner.

4. "In the act of delivery," says Professor Broadus, "the extemporaneous speaker has immense advantages. With far greater ease and effectiveness than if reading or writing, he can turn to account ideas which occur to him at the time. . . . If full of his theme, and impressed with its importance, he presently secures the interested and sympathizing attention of even a few good listeners, and the fire

of his eyes comes reflected back from theirs, till electric flashes pass to and fro between them, and his very soul glows, and blazes, and flames —he cannot fail sometimes to strike out thoughts more splendid and more precious than ever visit his mind in solitary musing." (*Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, p. 427.)

5. "And, as we have before seen," says the same excellent writer, "there is a more important gain than the new thoughts elicited. The whole mass of prepared material becomes brightened, warmed, sometimes transfigured, by the inspiration of delivery. The preacher's language rises without conscious effort, to suit the grandeur and beauty of his conceptions; and as Everett has expressed it in speaking of Webster, 'the discourse instinctively transposes itself into a higher key.' This exaltation of souls, rising at times to rapture, can never be fitly described, but the speaker who does not, in some measure, know what it means, was not born to be a speaker." (Ibid., p. 428.)

6. It leaves a preacher free to adjust his tones, thoughts and actions, to the ever varying feelings of his own heart, and those of the people. He can go slow or fast, high or low,

take advantage of the impulses of his congregation, and turn everything to the best account; whereas a mere reader is obliged to go through on the prescribed line. His sermon may fit some states of feeling, but be very inappropriate to others, and create disgust where it should please and impress. Reading will do very well in a case of mere instruction, when you are sure of attention, as in an address to a judge on a law point, but it is ill adapted to a jury or a congregation, where an impression is necessary.

7. It leaves room for the divine guidance and inspiration in everything, since nothing is so prepared that it may not be superseded by something better if suggested. God may help readers of prayers and sermons to read, but there is little room for His assistance beyond that, in the matter of delivery, while the mind of the extemporizer is open and ready for all heavenly influences.

8. It is the *natural* method, and the only one which gives full play to the mental, moral and physical powers of speech. Reading occupies the eyes, and constrains the head, hands, and body, confining them to artifical

attitudes, so that neither can act the impressive part in delivery for which it is so well adapted. Recitation engrosses the memory, and hardly admits of the animation and force which fresher words and thoughts would inspire, and therefore distorts the features and actions. For these and other reasons, readers are urged to be *natural*, but it is impossible to be so, while speaking in an *unnatural* way. No man can be natural on stilts.

9. It is more *pleasing* to the people generally, where they have not been perverted by education. They love to hear a sensible man *talk* of what he knows, thinks or feels, but few care to hear one read something which he has written. It may not be his own composition after all; he may have borrowed or stolen it, or if not, possibly he has changed his mind since it was written. They want to *hear* him speak, and *see* him act in a manner becoming what he says. If the voice, gestures, manifest feelings, and general movements, correspond with his assumptions, they will be impressed, convinced, and surrender, perhaps, to his will.

10. It is the most *successful* method. Teachers in schools, lawyers, campaign lecturers, re-

vival preachers, and preachers generally, who strike for immediate results, adopt it. Young men who commence their public ministry by reading, or adopt it afterwards, except on special subjects, make an irreparable mistake. They had better venture out extemporaneously and break down a dozen times. Children usually fall more or less in learning to walk, but it is better for them, than to crawl through life, or go on crutches.

11. It is the most *healthy* way of preaching. Sore throats, bronchitis, and other clerical diseases, come of unnatural study and speaking. Few can stand the drill of reading preachers in pent-up studies, hanging over a table to write, and then over a pulpit to read what they have written, with bad air, compressed lungs, and little exercise. This is all unnatural. Preachers should learn to think, and read, too, in the open air, and then to *talk* to the people as they talk in private, standing erect, moving about, and gesticulating in a graceful, free and easy manner, accommodating their tones to the variations of their subject. In this way they will find preaching a pleasure, and more healthful than most other callings.

12. It is the method of the ages. Greek and Roman orators generally followed it. "Sermons," says Dr. Neander, speaking of Chrysostom, who flourished in the fourth century, were rarely read off entirely from notes, or committed to memory ; sometimes they were freely delivered, after a plan prepared beforehand, and sometimes they were altogether extemporary." Chrysostom, himself, frequently preached on subjects suggested to him by the lesson of the day, or by something he met on his way to church, or which suddenly occurred during divine service.

The practice of reading sermons originated in England, in political jealousy, under the reign of Henry the VIII. It was extended in the troublous times of Charles the II., by the same means. The modern history of the different methods is generally understood, and need not be rehearsed. On the whole, we believe extemporary preaching is increasing. Though some Methodists have fallen to reading, other denominations are reading less than formerly.

The fourth method named, to wit: reading a part, and extemporizing a part, has its con-

veniencies, particularly where a sermon involves many dates, figures or quotations, and is no doubt better than reading the whole. Beyond this, we cannot advise this course as a common practice, where there is no constitutional obstacle in the way of extemporary preaching. So far as we have observed, Methodists generally prefer the part extemporized to that which is read. This method requires considerable practice to become effective. Besides, many preachers can speak much better than they can write.

OTHER CONDITIONS OF SUCCESSFUL PREACHING.

Having determined to preach extemporaneously, and settled upon the subject, and the order of its presentation, the next thing is to *preach*. This involves the necessity of other endowments. Many Christians know enough and are *good* enough to preach well, but they cannot do it for the want of capacity to present themselves and the Gospel to a congregation in an interesting and impressive manner. The inefficiency of ministers is often, if not generally, traceable directly to this point, as is evident from the fact that many of our best scholars

and profoundest thinkers and writers are nearly useless as preachers. By dint of exhaustive preparation, they have come to the birth, but are not able to bring forth. This statement is further attested by the fact that other men, of vastly inferior attainments, in literature and theology, are among our most popular and effective preachers. Right here lies the secret of pulpit power. What is it? Who can tell?

Without assuming to give a full answer to the question, we will venture to suggest, that

A PROPER STATE OF MIND TO PREACH,

has very much to do with it. Facility of thought and expression in private life, is no guarantee of freedom in extemporaneous speech before a congregation. "The fear of man," to which few, if any, are entire strangers in their early attempts at public speaking, "bringeth a snare." It is a disturbing force, which cripples the power of thought and memory, changes the tone of the voice, and embarrasses the action and movements of a speaker every way, so that he cannot feel easy, and *act* himself. In this state of mind, previous preparation is of little avail, and the chances of extemporizing any-

thing *new* and interesting are very small. The preacher must be delivered from this bondage, or he will never do justice to his subject or himself.

Then, there is sometimes a little pride of character or of reputation, which intervenes and creates so much anxiety about what may be thought of his effort, as to cripple him. Previous success, literary titles and diplomas often enhance one's solicitude to such a degree that he can do nothing equal to his real capacity. And this trouble is frequently augmented by his having determined to excel himself, and preach better than ever before. Seeing that things do not work as anticipated, he becomes disheartened and sinks below his ordinary level.

These unfavorable circumstances are not unfrequently aggravated by the absence of parishioners, in special reference to whom the preparation was made ; or by the unexpected presence of intelligent, and perhaps critical hearers. The stupid appearance of the congregation, or of individuals, too, has often beclouded a preacher. Besides, his own *weariness*, arising from over-study, possibly on the sermon he is trying to preach, the state of the atmosphere,

or the occurrence of some little irregularity, may distract or depress him.

If the writer could present a plausible method of avoiding these embarrassments, he would entitle himself to grateful remembrance. They have existed more or less in all ages and among all classes. Ministerial biography abounds in reports of easy times in preaching, and of hard times, and there seems to be no complete escape. Still, we believe the difficulty may be greatly lessened by proper mental and spiritual exercises just before, and at the *moment* of rising to preach. At all events, we will venture a few hints for consideration and experiment :

1. Remember that you are not your own,— that your life, being, talent, reputation and all you possess, belong to God.

2. That you occupy your present position by His special direction, and not by your own suggestion, and having done what you could to prepare for the occasion, He takes all the responsibility. This will relieve you of much anxiety.

3. Bear in mind that He who called you, and whose you are, pledges Himself to be with you, and expect His help accordingly.

4. Whatever discouraging thoughts or fears may oppress you, firmly resolve that you will deliberately go through your arrangement (nothing better occurring), regardless of the presence and opinions of other men. No preacher can speak freely and forcibly, until he becomes oblivious of everything but his subject and the accomplishment of its grand purposes. *Will*-power often steadies a man successfully into his work, who trembles with fear or nervous excitement from head to heel. Some preachers have uniformly, on special occasions, to say to themselves on rising to address a congregation, "*I will not* be *frightened*,—I *will* preach the sermon I have prepared. I *will* be independent,—I'll preach for God if I die in the effort." It is only in this way that they get command of the situation, and speak *naturally*. After a few minutes of this careful engineering, they lose all their solicitude, and their thoughts and impulses carry them triumphantly through.

5. Where one rises to preach under trepidation from any cause, feeling that he is not exactly in the right state of mind to commence, he had better make a short prayer. This will indicate to the people that he intends to preach

for spiritual effect, and will be likely to adjust his own feelings to the work before him. Or, he may make an appropriate remark or two (not an apology), before reading his text, to test the condition of the people, and improve his chances for commanding attention. Anything that is not derogatory to the pulpit, is better than that he should begin his sermon in confusion.

This course is practicable only to men of God, who preach to save. Others hardly come within the range of His promises, and it matters less how they preach. To be successful, one needs to come before the people full of divine feeling, and speak from a sincere heart. It gives a power to his thoughts, words, voice and gestures, which *art* cannot produce. The expressions of feeling are *natural*.

"What you don't *feel*, you'll never catch by hunting,
It must gush out spontaneous from the soul,
And with a fresh delight enchanting,
The hearts of all that hear control.

. . . . . .

Never a heart will be ignited,
Comes not the spark from the speakers soul."

In keeping with these truthful lines, says

Dr. James Dixon, of precious memory, "preaching is the effort of the preacher's soul. It is the soul itself, and if the preacher only uses his soul, and has it furnished with truth and knowledge, and religion, he must be a good preacher."

The eloquent Daniel Webster, whose career was not calculated to impress him with spiritual truth, nevertheless, saw this point with remarkable clearness. He says: "Neither eloquence nor preaching consists in language, but in that which is higher than all languages in the action of the soul, agitating and elevating the *souls* of other men. Whatever helps that action, whether the internal working of the soul itself or its outward expression through words or gestures, is a help to the proper design of the preacher, and whatever hinders that design, is a clog upon the wheels of eloquence."

Dr. Skinner, another good authority, remarks, "The preacher should, as much as possible, be *impassioned* by the subject; should put himself *wholly* into it, so as to be able to give *himself* to his hearers in, and with his discourse."

In view of the unutterable importance of

feeling in the preacher while in the act of preaching, Dr. Kidder exhorts ministers to resolve, if ever again permitted to preach, "that they will first seek to be" endued with power from on high—to be permeated with the Spirit of God, that they may kindle a similar flame in the breasts of others, inscribing on their very souls the image of Jesus."

Real feeling cannot be concealed any more than it can be counterfeited. "Chains," says another writer, "cannot bind it, mountains cannot bury it. It thaws through the most icy habits. It bursts from the lips. It speaks from the eye. It modulates the tone. It pervades the manner. It possesses and controls the whole man. He is seen to be in *earnest;* he convinces; he persuades. He *preaches*, the mere orator performs. One presents God and truth as he feels them, the other as he has learned them. The utterances of the first are the breathings of a living, throbbing soul, those of the last, the studied expressions of *art*."

Possessed of this marvellous power, a minister is free. He can be himself. It is the steam that takes him over the road, however difficult,

to his destination. He can explain, reason, exhort, entreat, weep and rejoice.

And, thank God, this highest and holiest, and most mighty of qualifications for the ministry, is attainable by all. It is furnished without money and without price. Some may not acquire much education. They have neither the time, means or capacity necessary to its attainment. But they *can* have *feeling*—they can have *power* with God and with men to render their preaching interesting and impressive. And if candidates will put this down *first* on their list of desirable acquisitions, and seek it with half the earnestness that some seek other attainments, they cannot fail to be burning and shining lights.

This feeling involves more than to have been once converted or *sanctified*, even more than to be honest and kindly disposed ; it is a present possession, a real endowment of the Spirit, that makes one love human souls, and feel willing to sacrifice much for their salvation. It is not unlike to that of Nehemiah, when he heard of the condition of Jerusalem, and wept and prayed ; or of Esther, when she fasted, and took the risk of losing her queenship and her life to

protect her people. When one is thus inspired, he can speak with power, though threatened with death.

To facilitate this desirable state of mind, Mr. Broadus gives preachers the following advice:

"Think it (your subject) all over within a short time of the hour for speaking, so that you may be sure of the ground, and so that your *feelings* may be brought into lively sympathy with the subject. . . . . Let the physical condition be as vigorous as possible. In order to this, seek good health in general; take abundant sleep the night before speaking; eat moderately, of food easily digested; . . . . and do not exhaust your vitality during the day by exciting conversation, ... so that *feeling* may quickly respond to thought, that there may be sympathetic emotion, and at the same time complete self-control.

"Above all, be *yourself*. Speak out with freedom and earnestness what you think and feel. Better a thousand faults, than through dread of faults, to be tame. . . . If there is something you have to say, speak it out, and by all means let there be no affectation

or artificiality." (*Treatise on Preparation*, etc., p. 448.)

Mr. Spurgeon gives his students some valuable lessons on the subject. He says: "Your prayers will be your ablest assistants, while your discourses are yet on the anvil. While other men, like Esau, are hunting for their portion, you will find the savory meat near at home, and may say in truth what Jacob said falsely, 'The Lord brought it to me.' . . . If you can gather your matter on your knees at the gate of heaven, you will not fail to speak well. Nothing can so gloriously fit you to preach as descending fresh from the mount of communion with God on behalf of the people. . . . A truly pathetic delivery, in which there is no affectation, but much affection, can only be the offspring of prayer. There is no rhetoric like that of the heart, and no school for learning it, but the foot of the cross. It were better that you never learned a rule of human oratory, but were full of the power of heaven-born love, than that you master Quintilian, Cicero, and Aristotle, and remain without the apostolic anointing."

After all these precautions, you may have a

"hard time." Memory, impulse, and mental activity may fail to serve you, and you may seem to be completely blocked. Some of the greatest of preachers have been confounded. In view of emergencies of this kind, Dr. Kidder says: "If you forget what you want to say next, do not stop. Nothing is so awkward as a dead pause. . . . Say something, repeat, recapitulate, talk at random even, anything rather than *stop*. If you have become embarrassed with a tangled sentence, do not turn back, but burst through. If you have made a mistake of grammar, pronunciation, or the like, do not stop to correct it, unless it is serious. . . . If you greatly blunder in style, forget half your best thoughts, or utterly break down, it will not kill you. Other great men have failed. Remember young Robert Hall."

And do not appear to be frustrated, nor hurry, but take your congregation along with you. A public speaker must not *show* embarrassment, however disturbed. Nothing is to be lost, and much may be gained by self-possession.

Experiences like these have sometimes been most successful. Mourners have been comforted and sinners awakened and converted. They

usually humble the preacher, and show him how dependent he is on God, and are followed by extraordinary triumphs.

Since writing the above, we have listened to a well-worded sermon, which displayed more than ordinary ability, and it fell upon the audience very pleasantly, but without producing the slightest emotion. Going to church from these very pages, we could but inquire, why is this? The sentiments advanced are correct and beautifully expressed; why don't the people *feel* them? The answer is not difficult; there was no feeling contemplated or provided for by the preacher, either in his preparation or delivery. It was purely an intellectual effort. The soul was not called into exercise from the beginning to the end. The preacher neither tried to feel himself, or to excite emotion in others. We heard him through and retired quietly and in order, as unmoved as if we had listened to a discourse on mathematics. Yet we have no doubt that if the preacher had exerted his *soul* as much as he did his intellect in the preparation and delivery of that sermon, it would have been of a much better character, and sent a useful influence through the assem-

bly. He had learning and good address, but his heart was not in it. He preached *officially*, and evidently did not aim at anything more than a fair and manly presentation of the subject.

Methodism cannot thrive under such preaching. When it ceases to move sinners toward God, its days will be numbered.

CHAPTER VII.

OF THE DELIVERY OF SERMONS, AS TO VOICE AND ACTION.

THE voice is the chief instrument by which a preacher is to impress himself and his message upon the people, and it is one of many strings. It is not a vehicle of words and ideas only, but when properly modulated, it represents the character and importance which the speaker attaches to them. For instance, the word *fire* really means the same thing, however expressed, but uttered in one tone it attracts no attention, in another, it startles a whole neighborhood. By some law of God, which we but imperfectly understand, certain tones are tender and soothing, while others are frightful or maddening. There is not a possible feeling in the human heart, that may not be excited or repressed by the voice. "It may be modulated by art to any sound of softness or of strength, of gentleness, or harshness, of harmony or discord."

Preachers, therefore, who regard the *sense* of their sermons as everything, and the *expression* of them as of little consequence, make a great mistake. They preach good sermons, but they do it in a miserable way, and fail to be impressive, and then wonder what ails the people that they do not appreciate them. The truth is, they are *monotonous;* they preach doctrine and duty, joy and sorrow, heaven and hell, on the same key, and in the same tone, and often indicate less personal interest in either, than they do in reading their notices. Why is this? It is not so in private conversation. There, they modulate their voices according to the sense of what they are saying, and the conviction they wish to produce. But the moment they enter the pulpit, they drop right into a *ding dong* style, high or low, it matters not which, and drag through without much regard to nature or art.

Some voices are ill adapted to public speaking. They lack melody, compass, volume and penetration; but experience has demonstrated that they are susceptible of improvement in all these respects. If preachers will cultivate their voices, as some of them do their brains and

muscles, they will, at least, overcome all marked defects. This may be done under the direction of a good book or teacher, or by private practice in speaking, singing, or reading aloud. Then, if they will vary their voices in preaching, as ordinary people do in animated conversation, according to the character and design of different parts of their discourses, they may be interesting and impressive, though some of their tones may be disagreeable. Appropriate intonations hide a multitude of vocal defects.

The voice, if much and carefully used, will work itself smooth, melodious, and strong. If abused by long and loud exercise, its defects will be augmented and multiplied, and it will, sooner or later, break down. Many have screamed themselves into the grave, under the false notion that noise is power.

Ministers may occasionally, for a moment, strike their highest note with good effect, and it will not injure them. But to preach long on that key, is hurtful. And it is unprofitable to linger much on any other tone, high or low. Good sermons will take a man through the whole vocal scale, running, walking, and at

times, almost halting, if he follows the laws of effectiveness. Variety of tone and movement is as necessary in preaching as in music. Nor will *rapidity* of utterance injure one, if limited to short intervals. If extended through the discourse, like extremely *loud* speech, it vitiates the blood, impairs the whole system, and produces extreme weariness.

Articulation is a function of the voice which is entitled to special attention. A poor voice with distinct articulation is more agreeable, and better understood, then a good one without it. It is difficult to understand some stentorian preachers, because they clip their words. They fail to sound certain letters, and even whole syllables. Or, if they express them at all, they do it deep down in their throats, so that the outside world cannot tell what they mean. We have lately listened to what we believe to have been a magnificent sermon, but failed to appreciate it, solely on account of the preacher's horrible articulation. His lower tones gave no articulate sound, and the higher ones were little more intelligible than the noise of escaping steam. And what made it especially provoking, it was all the result of a ridicu-

lous attempt at what some mistakenly call *oratory*.

Good articulation is to be acquired out of church, and not in it, by reading aloud *ar-tic-u-late-ly*, giv-ing each vow-el, con-so-nant and syl-la-ble its own proper expression. Attention should be given to this point, in con-ver-sa-tion, also. By these means one will soon contract a habit, which will largely atone for a poor voice, so that he may be easily heard in most churches, and think no more about ar-tic-u-la-tion in the pulpit, than practical grammarians think about grammar in conversation.

The voice is also concerned in another important department of public speaking, namely, *pronunciation*. Some preachers are strangely at fault in this respect, reading, "he that believe-uth shall be saved,"—"bless-ud are the pure in heart,"—"Seek um," for "Seek Him," etc. By giving close attention to this point in reading and hearing, consulting the dictionary, and going through with a little book entitled, "One Thousand Mistakes Corrected," you will soon acquire the habit of correct pronunciation.

I might also speak particularly of *emphasis*, though that is involved in modulation. It is

the chief element of power with some speakers. They ring the changes on certain emphatic words, until they electrify the hearers, through and through. They use the emphasis, both of silence and of sound, as required by the sense.

Preachers often mistake in commencing on the wrong key. If they strike too high, it is very difficult to fall. They had better err in the other direction, since it is easier to rise. But they should announce their text and introduction with sufficient force to be heard in all parts of the church, if they have to repeat. Whether they are heard or not, may sometimes be determined by looking at the people. In cases of doubt, it is practicable to test the question by other means. A friend of ours, having a light voice, did this one evening in a strange hall, to admiration. Rising to address an immense audience, and expressing fear that he could not be heard, he stopped, and with an appropriate gesture, asked, "Does that young man standing at the other end of the hall hear what I am now saying?" "Yes, every word," was the prompt reply. "O well," said the speaker, "then I will dismiss my fears and go on," and he did so *mightily*. That

little episode helped him. It relaxed the rigidity of the moment, and created a little sympathy between speaker and hearers that was exceedingly useful to both.

Some preachers seem to think it very *dignified* to commence in a low and dull manner, and thus fail to command attention. Others rush in vociferously, and are at full speed in a minute. Both styles are unnatural. Mark the starting of a steamboat, or engine. There is *real* dignity combined with efficiency, that interests everybody, however familiar with the movement.

Many think they must close on the highest possible note. This may, or may not be appropriate. A whisper, or a breath, is often more powerful than thunder. The better way is to let the subject, the occasion, and your own feelings decide what is best.

Not a few speak too low generally, seeming to forget that it is important that the people should hear what they say. This is particularly the case at *funerals*. They not only begin low, but go through in a suppressed tone, as though they were in the presence of the sick and dying. We have just witnessed a performance of the

kind, where several preachers of splendid voices participated, and delivered grand addresses, we have no doubt, but were not distinctly heard by one-third of the congregation. Others speak and pray in the sick room, in tones better adapted to a camp-meeting. This is simply ridiculous. Why do we not adapt our voices to the occasion and place?

Some indulge in sing-song, or whining tones, imagining them to be more pious and impressive than manly, common sense speech; but this is an error. Preachers should have no set tones, good or bad, but speak as the sense and circumstances require. Many, unfortunately, take just the opposite course. The moment they enter the pulpit, they drop their personality, and assume the perfunctory style of a bygone officialism, or some other, which is possibly worse.

OF GESTICULATION.

Action, or gesticulation, has been called the speech of the body, and embraces the action of the head, feet, hands and countenance, as well as that of the body itself. It is a powerful instrument, and may be employed in a manner to ex-

plain and enforce language, or to pervert and detract from its legitimate influence. It is claimed by some to be more expressive than language itself, and is so in many cases. For instance, an earnest shake of the head is often more emphatic than the word *no*, which it is used to express. So, laying a finger across the lips, as is done by our Indians, enjoins silence more forcibly than the word itself. Indeed, the power of gesticulation can hardly be overstated.

Yet, as a matter of fact, many preachers give it but little attention. They seem to think if they can master theology, and suitable language to express it, they will be all right, and can preach effectively. A few, however, go to the other extreme, and fill themselves with artificial rules, which give them an air of formality and unnaturalness in the pulpit, much to their disadvantage. There is still another class, who regard proper gesticulation of considerable importance, but thinking it beyond their reach, make little effort to attain it.

In this condition of affairs, our chances to assist you are not very encouraging, especially as professors of elocution seem to think that

the living teacher is indispensable. Words and diagrams representing the graceful attitudes to be taken, are not sufficient. To make thorough work of instruction, they must have their pupils before them, and actually put them through the curriculum of their art. Still we will venture a few suggestions :

1. WITH REGARD TO POSTURE.

Some regard leaning upon the pulpit as a great fault, and we have no doubt it is so, if done as a regular habit. Yet occasions will occur in preaching when, for a moment, it is right, and indeed the most appropriate attitude, especially when referring to those who sit near, or around it. Many young preachers contract the habit from sheer timidity, and a sense of weakness. They feel the need of something to steady or support them, until they get into their subject.

These same teachers object to walking about the platform, and advise an erect posture behind the pulpit, with "the hands hanging by the side, with the palm towards the body." But this looks to us decidedly sophomorean and *stiff*. It is unnatural. The erect posture is

right, generally, but may need to be changed. Moving about, not in a fidgety and meaningless way, "like a tiger in his cage," but in a deliberate and sensible manner, when addressing different parts of the audience, is expressive of both earnestness and ease. As to the hands, it would seem more graceful to place one on the Bible, or desk, rather than to let both hang by the side.

Placing both hands squarely on the hips, folding them over the abdomen or behind the back, under the coat-skirt; crossing the legs, before or behind, vibrating from side to side like a cat about to spring upon its prey, holding the hands in the breeches pockets, adjusting the hair and beard, blowing the nose, flourishing a pocket-handkerchief at the close of each division, and clearing the throat with unnecessary tumult, are offensive habits which should *never* be practised. Some of them may do for lawyers in court, but not for the pulpit. Young ministers had better shave close, sew up their pockets, and leave their cambrics at home, rather than offend the taste of their hearers in this way. Not a few seriously injure their influence by these and other violations of good manners.

But we see no objection to a minister temporarily putting his hands behind him in the ordinary way, especially the left hand, while he is gesticulating with the other. This is a graceful attitude, and may be occasionally assumed for the sake of variety without particular regard to the subject under consideration. In a word, the posture of a preacher, whether standing, sitting or kneeling, should be natural and easy. This is about all that need be said on the subject.

2. IN REGARD TO GESTURE.

Treating it with special reference to the use of the limbs, the first thing is to avoid all vulgar, awkward and extravagant movements, such as banging the Bible, stamping and pompously parading about the pulpit.

Avoiding these errors, a minister will be decent, at least. But there are other awkwardnesses that should not be overlooked, such as working the hands up and down edgewise like a board saw, or horizontally at right angles, when the subject requires nothing of the kind. It is one of the most amazing facts that men of sense and learning do fall into so many

antics in public speaking. We have lately listened to a polished brother, who stood bending his noble form forward like a man with a curved back-bone, and brandished his left hand, half the time clenched, as if he were having a "set to" with some impious intruder, while his right hand, the proper one for ordinary gesticulation, hung dangling about as though he did not know what do with it. The subject and the occasion, and, we may add, the feelings of the speaker, called for persuasion and tender appeal.

A little later we heard another brother of excellent voice, and generally pleasing manners, who had the unusual habit of laying his broad left hand upon the side of his face, as if he was suffering from a severe toothache, though he had nothing of the kind. But, for the sake of variety, we suppose, he would occasionally change it to the top of his head. This was no sin, but it marred his excellent address.

The proper course is to follow the subject, and gesticulate as the aspects and objects of it suggest, as children do, and as you would do, were you earnestly engaged in private conversation. It is impossible to show in advance just

how you should manage your hands or feet. That must be determined by the impression you desire to make. And you need to acquire the habit out of the pulpit, as you do that of speaking grammatically, that you may have no occasion to think of it while preaching.

3. WITH REGARD TO THE COUNTENANCE,

which is the index of the mind and heart, it would seem that little need be said. Yet under the constraints of the pulpit, it is often more perverted than any other part of the body. For instance some ministers speak of heaven with the solemnity of death, and of hell with a smile. We have just heard one declare himself *perfectly happy in God,* and knowing the man, we believed him, yet if he had been at the funeral of his wife, he could not have appeared more sad. But on leaving the pulpit he lighted up, and assumed a facial aspect becoming the condition he described. Another good man of a different mould, smiles through a sermon of alarming truth, unconsciously pulling his little moustache, first one side and then the other, as though it were the object of his special care. Both of these men wore "a speaking counte-

nance," but in glaring contradiction of their utterances, though men of rare opportunities and qualifications.

On the other hand, we find preachers of wonderful facial power, who confirm the representation of Quintilian, who says : " With this (the countenance), we supplicate, threaten, soothe, mourn, rejoice, triumph ; upon this the audience hang, keep their eyes fixed ; it excites in them favorable or unfavorable emotions ; from it they understand almost everything ; often it becomes more significant than words ! "

" It is one of the chief secrets of success," says Walker, in his Elocution ; " *feeling* cannot be expressed by words alone, or even by the tones of the voice. It finds its best, and ofttimes, its only expression in the flash of passion on the cheek, in the speaking eye, the contracted brow, the compressed lips, the heaving breast, the trembling frame, in the rigid muscle, and the general bearing of the whole body."

Whitefield swayed his hearers with his *face*, more than with his words. It is said to have been " like a canvas, upon which he painted every passion that stirs the human breast. It was at one moment terrific, as if all the furies

were enthroned on that dark brow; and next, as by a dissolving view, there would came forth an angelic sweetness that savored of heaven." And then, we add, a flood of tears. "Through the eye the soul makes its most clear manifestations of itself. Joy and grief, anger, pride, scorn, hatred, love, jealousy, pity; in a word, all the passions and emotions of the human heart, in all their degrees and outer workings with each other, express themselves with the utmost fulness and power in the eyes."

A preacher who will use his eyes to the best advantage, must not allow them to become fixed upon his manuscript, or anything else; wander carelessly about the walls of the room, or assume a vacant stare. He must look at the people individually, and make them feel that he means them, and is trying to do them good.

For the benefit of readers who are not favored with many books on the subject, we indicate the generally accepted significance of a few gestures in common use, as follows:

OF THE HEAD.

The hanging down of the head denotes shame or grief; the holding of it up, pride or courage.

To nod forward implies assent; to toss the head back, dissent.

The inclination of the head, implies diffidence or languor.

The head is averted, or turned away, in dislike or horror.

It leans forward in attention.

OF THE EYES.

The eyes are raised in prayer.

They weep in sorrow.

They burn in anger.

They are downcast or averted in shame or grief.

They are cast on vacancy in thought.

They are cast in various directions in doubt and anxiety.

OF THE ARMS.

The placing the hand on the head, indicates pain or distress.

On the eyes, shame or sorrow.

On the lips, an injunction of silence.

On the breast, an appeal to conscience.

The hand is waved or flourished in joy or contempt.

Both hands are extended in blessing.

They are clasped or wrung in affliction.

They are held forward and open in friendship.

OF THE BODY.

The body, held erect, indicates steadiness and courage.

Thrown back, pride.

Stooping forward, weakness, condescension or compassion.

Bending, reverence or respect.

Prostrate, the utmost humility or abasement.

OF THE LOWER LIMBS.

The firm position of the lower limbs, signifies courage or obstinacy.

Bended knees, indicate humility, timidity or weakness.

The lower limbs advance in desire or courage.

They retire, in aversion or fear.

Start, in terror.

Stamp, in anger and authority.

Kneel, in submission and prayer.

(*Hamell's Science of Elocution.*)

Some speakers act too much, and without proper discrimination. They gesticulate their

Scripture lessons, hymns, notices and prayers, very nearly in the same stereotyped manner. Others gesticulate too little. To attain the happy medium, it is necessary to read, think, and observe effective preachers, invite criticism, speak honestly, earnestly, and from the heart.

MISCELLANEOUS SUGGESTIONS.

The advice of David Garrick, the famous actor, given in the following letter to a young preacher, is worthy of consideration :

"MY DEAR PUPIL :

"You know how you would feel and speak in the parlor to a dear friend, who was in imminent danger of his life, and with what energetic pathos of diction and countenance you would enforce the observance of what you really thought would be for his preservation. You would not think of playing the orator, of studying your emphasis, cadence or gesture. You would be yourself ; and the interesting nature of your subject, impressing your heart, would furnish you with the most natural tone of voice, the most proper language, the most engaging features, and the most suitable and graceful

gestures. What you would be in the parlor, be in the pulpit; and you will not fail to please, to affect, to profit.

"Adieu, ———."

"Yes," says Dr. Joseph Parker, of London, "*that* is rhetoric. Be earnest and you will be eloquent; let your *soul* speak, and your words will be wise and good. When I venture to put you on your guard against professional rhetoricians, you must not understand that I am cautioning you against friendly and sensible criticism. We cannot see ourselves as others see us; hence many an ungainly action or offensive habit may be modified, if not quite removed, through the good offices of judicious critics. . . . . Invite the knife, if you would be strong and useful; fret at criticism, if you wish to lose a lifetime, rather than endure temporary mortification. What I do warn you against, is *the wickedness of taking* any studied gestures into the pulpit. I denounce this as iniquity in the sight of God, as the consummation of heartlessness, as a hypocrisy, as transparent as it is audacious. Abandon all selfish notions of popularity, when you stand before men as the messenger of God; and that you

may be enabled to do this, watch and pray, and fast, if need be, and God will accept your sacrifice. . . . Know you not that you preach in God's hearing as well as man's? Will you cheat your hearers with an attitude, when you should give them a Gospel? Will you perplex them with a riddle, when you should call them to salvation. . . . May God in His mercy strike us dumb rather than allow us to preach ourselves." (*Ad Clerum*, pp. 31, 32.)

The same author's remarks in favor of *naturalness* in delivery, are equally pertinent. He says:

"Be *natural*, be as *unlike a book as possible*, are the two heads which are now to be discussed. To be natural is to be *yourself* in look, in speech, in action; provided always that you have a self upon which nature has stamped her own simple and graceful impress. If the expression may be allowed, some preachers seem to have a very unnatural nature; in their case a good deal of grinding and polishing may have to be done before they can be safely trusted with the advice to be themselves. An illustrative case occurs to me this moment.

"A ministerial acquaintance of mine (Mr

Dexter) is entirely innocent of imitating any one, yet a more unnatural speaker never addressed an audience—never ; . . . for fluency, pomposity, and inflation he stands alone. He can talk by the hour in a most deafening and terrifying manner. . . . . No mill-wheel was ever so monotonously energetic ; no barrel was ever so incapable of being worn out ; no furnace-fire ever tore up the chimney at so desperate a rate. . . . With a lofty impartiality, he creates an equal volume of smoke around every theme which he attempts to expound, and in doing so, assumes the air of a righteous man. My unnatural acquaintance is quite as eloquent in giving his opinion, whether a ministerial dinner should cost one and sixpence or one and ninepence, as when describing the creation of man, or the battle of Armageddon. Can anything be finer in the way of even-handed justice ? Does an express train care a pin whether it is carrying one passenger or ten, except that it may go faster when it has least to do ? Certainly not ; and my acquaintance is exactly an express train without passengers, but not without a furious driver. I have heard him give a public announcement of a tea-meeting, tickets,

ninepence each, in a manner quite as solemn and urgent as if in one hurried breath he had been announcing that there was a flood in England, a fire in Scotland, and an earthquake half over the continent of Europe. . . . . He cannot be easy ; he cannot lower his pompous tone to an ordinary key ; if he were to ask a chambermaid for a candle, he would leave upon her mind the impression that the morning would rise upon the smoking ruins of the house. . . . . In private life his grandiloquence is overpowering, so much so, that when I see him in the distance, I avail myself of the next turning to the left, wherever it may lead to. . . . He knows nothing of the charm of variety, nothing of the distribution of light and shade, nothing of the graceful undulation which at once relieves and delights the mind. Let this man then be a caution to you ; in that way he may even yet be turned to a good purpose." (*Ibid.*, pp. 22–24).

Unnaturalness often comes of an attempt to imitate some distinguished preacher. Dr. Parker had a friend, a Mr. Thomas, who fell into this error. Taking Mr. Binney for his model, "he used eye-glasses set in gold to give him

a knowing look, polished them just before announcing his text, and performed several other little mannerisms that were well enough for Mr. Binney, but awkward in him, upon which the doctor facetiously remarks:

"Dogs paint themselves tawny, and then set up for lions; dwarfs buy high-heeled boots, and give themselves out as giants. . . . You have heard of maiden ladies who have lived by themselves in lonely houses, setting a number of men's hats upon the hall tables at nights, so as to give any intruder the notion that the house was full of burly defenders; even so do the Thomases of the pulpit; they borrow all of Mr. Binney's old hats, and then boldly challenge the world to touch their ministerial reputation."

Many of the faults of delivery spring from ambition to be eloquent,—orators. Misapprehending the real nature and source of eloquence, some men load themselves down with the armor of *art*, and go into the pulpit trammelled from head to foot. Such preachers will do well to read the mature opinions of the great Daniel Webster on the subject. Among other things he says:

"True eloquence, indeed, does not consist in speech. It cannot be brought from far. Labor and learning may toil for it, but they will toil in vain. Words and phrases may be marshalled in every way, but they cannot compass it. It must exist *in the man*, in the subject, and in the occasion. Affected passion, intense expression, the pomp of declamation, all may aspire to it; they cannot reach it. It comes, if it come at all, like the outbreaking of a fountain from the earth, or the bursting forth of volcanic fires, with spontaneous, original, native force. The graces taught in the schools, the costly ornaments and studied contrivances of speech, shock and disgust men when their own lives, and the fate of their wives, their children and their country hang on the decision of an hour. Then words have lost their power, rhetoric is vain, and all elaborate oratory contemptible. Even genius itself then feels rebuked and subdued, as in the presence of higher qualities. Then patriotism is eloquent; then self-devotion is eloquent. The clear conception, outrunning the deductions of logic; the high purpose, the firm resolve, the dauntless spirit, speaking on the tongue, beaming from the eye, informing

every feature, and urging the whole man onward, right onward to his object; this, this is eloquence; it is action, noble, sublime, godlike action."

When a preacher forgets self, and is filled with desire to do good, that is, filled with the Spirit, he will be natural, eloquent, and impressive.

But it is easier to tell how preaching ought to be done, than to do it. The atmosphere is not always favorable to the best performance. This is often chargeable to architects and trustees, who fail to provide for good ventilation. "*Cold* churches too, sometimes paralyze both preacher" and his hearers, so that it is impossible to "attend upon the Lord without distraction." Some nervous preachers are badly disconcerted by the coming in of tardy hearers during the service; but more by others *leaving*. This is a distressing trial to most preachers who are *not* nervous. Modest men naturally think that they leave because they dislike the preacher, and the thought crushes them, unless they have pluck enough to neutralize the imposition in some shrewd way. We never blamed an old brother, who was equal to any emergency, who

remarked, on seeing a number of flirts leave the church while he was preaching, "Don't be disturbed, my friends; these ladies are probably *servant* girls, who are obliged to go home to look after the children." It is hardly necessary to say, that no other lady left till the benediction was pronounced.

And what preacher has not been annoyed by seeing some of his saintly hearers asleep, while he was doing his best to make an impression on them? The most perfect preparation is of little avail to extemporizers, under these circumstances. Nor is it easy to see exactly how to break the spell, and command attention. It is well if one does not get provoked, and let off an avalanche of fun or sarcasm that is worse than sleep. I have sometimes apologized for my hearers in a good-natured way, and told them not to keep awake on my account, but to be careful not to talk, as some do in their dreams. Listening to a sermon one evening in a school-house, a young man lost himself, and imagining that he was in school, arose and asked with full voice, "*Please, sir, may I go out?*" The excitement which it created in the congregation soon waked him up, and he fell

back in his seat not a little mortified. I have never heard of his sleeping in meeting since.

But this is nothing new in clerical experience. It has been the occasion of many shrewd expedients which we can hardly approve. There is one, however, too good to be omitted. It shows a delicacy, and an address in dealing with this somewhat difficult question, which may be turned to good account. Rev. James Bonnar, a man of eminence and marked eccentricities, was one day preaching at Kettle. "It was a very warm day; the church closely packed; the occasion, the Monday following the communion. He observed with some annoyance, many of the congregation nodding and sleeping in their pews whilst he was preaching; he took his measures accordingly, and introduced the word 'hyperbolical' into his sermon; when he paused, and said, 'Now, my friends, some of you may not understand this word "hyperbolical.' I'll explain it. Suppose I were to say that this congregation were *all* asleep in this church at the present time, I would be speaking hyperbolically; because (looking round) I don't believe much more than one-half of you are sleeping.' The effect was instantaneous, and

those who were nodding recovered themselves and nudged their sleeping neighbors, and the preacher went on as if nothing had happened." (*Pulpit Table Talk*, p. 81.)

But, my brethren, whatever may betide you, do not be *bitter*, or *sour*, and never *scold*. The best of preachers have trials enough to bear, and those who endure them most heroically and patiently will suffer least from them. You will sometimes feel that you cannot preach at all, but do not be discouraged. The writer felt this early in the second year of his ministry, when a fanatical trustee gave him a terrible "*hetcheling*" before the whole afternoon congregation, because he had had the impertinence to establish a Sunday-school, which said trustee pronounced un-Methodistical. The young preacher felt that he could never enter that pulpit again. But he did, the evening of that same day, and preached to *sinners* with all his might, making no allusion to the outburst of the afternoon. And God, who makes the time of our necessity His opportunity, appeared, and a wonderful revival commenced with *fifteen* at the altar, mostly young men. God will help you, brethren, in every time of need, if you keep

sweet and humble. But the moment you lose the Spirit, and become belligerent, your pulpit power will wane.

CHAPTER VIII.

SUGGESTIONS WITH REGARD TO OTHER PUBLIC SERVICES.

THE effect of preaching is more or less influenced by its attendant services, for which the preacher is chiefly responsible. He may lessen or increase his chances of success by the manner in which he performs them. The brief consideration of a few particulars will be sufficient to indicate our judgment in the matters involved, and may be useful to inexperienced readers. To go a step back, we will offer a remark or two :

1. On the preacher's personal appearance and public manners. Custom requires that the costume of ministers should be neat, and a little different from that of men engaged in secular pursuits. A preacher, therefore, who enters the pulpit dressed like a clown or a

dandy, creates a prejudice against himself at the outset. To say that the public taste is *wrong*, does not relieve the case, for it is not sin, and for him to make an issue with his people on so trifling grounds, and at so great a hazard, is not commendable in a man intrusted with eternal interests. Where one is at liberty to choose for himself, his dress is a fair index to his rank and character. Some err in adopting a rude and untidy habit, but more by following the fashions of the world. The better way is, to dress in a comfortable, clerical style, the least calculated to attract attention, and thus avoid giving offence to any one. While we admire independence, where truth and righteousness are at stake, we think it folly, if not sin, in cases like this, where no moral principle is involved. It will be likely to injure the influence of the offender with some of his people. Not a few have ruined themselves by this useless impropriety. Should my readers be tempted to imitate their foolish example, I advise them to read the fourteenth chapter of Romans, and follow its inspired commands.

2. The manner of entering the church and pulpit may seem of little importance, yet it is

entitled to careful attention. It is desirable that the first appearance of a minister should make a favorable impression, but if he comes strolling into the church, glancing about, some observing people will infer that he is not duly impressed with the solemnity of the place. This, however, is not half so bad as for him to go whisking up the aisle like a frivolous dancing girl rushing upon the stage, a disgusting practice of modern origin, suggesting the want of grace, if not of brains. You should be as unaffected and modest here, as in preaching.

It is little less objectionable to sit down on entering the pulpit, and gaze about with apparent self-confidence, that feels no need of help. The most becoming way is to kneel at the foot of the steps, or after entering the pulpit, and spend a minute or two in silent prayer. Your influence on the congregation will depend very much upon the judgment they shall form of your sincerity and relations to God. With regard to the services, we may venture to say,

1. That in announcing your hymns and lessons, you should be deliberate and distinct, glancing at the people to see if you are heard Read thoughtfully, and with emphasis, giving

an occasional word of explanation or application, as may be deemed useful. This will show that you regard these services an important part of public worship. Besides, it gives you an opportunity to interject useful thoughts that are not embraced in your sermon, and interest the people in the word of God. To do this properly, you need to select your hymns and lessons before going to the church.

Preachers do well, also, to join in the singing. It is an example that others will be likely to imitate, and it will save you from the objectionable practice of fumbling over books during this part of the service. And it is useful occasionally to ask the singers to repeat some particular verse, the sentiment of which you wish to have deeply impressed on the congregation. By these means you will give the opening and closing services their proper significance, which is often overlooked in the hurried and careless manner of their performance.

2. Prayer is, perhaps, the most neglected of all parts of pulpit duty. A few write and memorize their prayers, as they do their sermons. This shows care, but it is unfavorable

to devotion. Others extemporize them without previous thought. Hence, some excellent preachers appear to great disadvantage in this part of their work.

The better way, in our opinion, is to think of the matter in advance, inquiring what the people need, and varying our prayers from Sabbath to Sabbath, according to their varying circumstances. This will give variety and adaptation, and keep us out of many errors. For instance:

1. We shall pray to God and not to the *congregation.* Perfunctory prayers, though interspersed with "*O Lord,*" and "*heavenly Father,*" are usually addressed to the people. But where the heart is oppressed with the sufferings of families and individuals, and the spiritual necessities of others, it is apt to rise to heaven in earnest pleadings for relief.

2. We shall not pray *controversially.* Some men have an unfortunate habit of discussing doctrinal questions in prayer, which indicates more dogmatic zeal than piety.

3. We shall not pray *censoriously.* We have known ministers to implicate opponents in prayer, as they hardly dared to do in debate.

It is a cowardly indiscretion, that ought to be avoided.

4. We shall not indulge in excessive compliments. Pastors sometimes flatter their people more in prayer that in private intercourse. Praying for this very intelligent minister, or liberal layman, is not in good taste in a public assembly.

5. Having our hearts deeply interested in the attainment of some specific blessing, we shall avoid dry, rambling discourses, which are more of the nature of a lecture than a prayer. The following specimen ought to be sufficient to disgust all true ministers with a style, which we fear some are trying to imitate. It was delivered to a Boston audience:

"We know that these outward *things* are but a sparkle of Thy power, a whisper of Thy wisdom, a faint breath of Thy loving kindness. Father, we thank Thee for the world about us, above, and beneath. We bless Thee for the austere loveliness of the winter heavens, for those fixed or wandering fires which lend their splendor to the night, for the fringe of beauty, wherewith Thou borderest the morning and the evening sky, and for this daily sun, sending

his roseate flush of light across the white and wintry world. . . . We thank Thee for the moon which scarfs with loveliness the retreating shoulders of the night, and for all the wondrous majesty of stars, wherewith Thou hast spangled the raiment of darkness, giving beauty to the world when the sun withdraws his light."

Instead of praying for everybody and everything desirable in stereotyped phrase, it is better to seize upon a few vital points of present pressing necessity, and urge them with power. This kind of prayer is in striking harmony with the preaching which we recommend. It is spiritual, personal, expectant, thrilling. No one can hear it without feeling that the divine and human are in contact. It is not intended, however, to exclude other subjects of prayer, though the present help of the Spirit should always be made prominent before preaching.

The importance of this subject fully justifies the insertion of the following from an old divine, whose prayers attracted special attention:

"My custom for many years," he says, "has been to ponder on a Sabbath morning such facts as have come to my knowledge during the

course of the week, e. g., Are any sick? Is any member suffering from sorrow, relative or personal? Has any death occurred? What is there in the Sabbath school demanding special notice? Are there any inquiring the way of salvation? By asking these questions" (he said to a young preacher), "you will be in a position, to meet the wants of the people in an acceptable manner. Be assured that if you wish the congregation to follow the line of petition, you must touch every heart, and as far as practicable, allude to every case. . . . It is lamentable to observe how much of our petitionary agency is mere vapid formality, performed in so perfunctory a manner that the congregation feels quite relieved when the prayer is concluded. It has frequently happened that men have been brought to God in the act of public prayer, their case has been so strikingly marked out, and mercy so fervently implored, that they have been brought to consideration and penitence. It must of necessity arouse attention, when a professed worshipper can say, '*that is my case*,' while the minister is leading the devotion. . . . Observe, we must have *prayer*, not *talk*: the difference is essential.

True prayer is the language of the heart ; it is simple, earnest, scriptural. To succeed in public petition, I know of nothing so useful as the previous reading of the devotional portions of the Bible. There is no liturgy equal to many parts of David's psalms ; there you have the man's heart poured out in the fulness of simplicity. . . . Never try to be eloquent, flowery, or fine in prayer ; be lowly, reverent, and simple. Avoid all eccentric expressions, all trite, smart sayings. When man communes with God, he should be abased, for only as man sees himself as nothing, and God as everything, will he learn to worship with reverence and godly fear."

Let the voice be modulated according to circumstances, always loud enough to be distinctly heard, and never so loud as to be offensive to good taste. Many preachers pray in about the same tone, whether in a large church or a small private room. Do not pray so long as to be tedious, or so short as to give the impression that you regard this service of little importance. Mr. Wesley enjoined upon his preachers not to pray more than eight or ten minutes. Some men would restrict you to a few words, perhaps

to the form known as the Lord's prayer, and object to anything like a plea, showing why we ask for this or that, or why it should be granted, but Scripture examples, especially the prayer of Jesus in the 17th chapter of John, authorizes the largest liberty. Not, that our heavenly Father needs to be informed, but to impress our own hearts with the facts which justify our asking, and the expectation that we shall receive. To present these facts, and the promises which authorize our prayer, is eminently proper. Though they may not affect the divine disposition toward us, they nourish our desire and faith, and thus bring us into a better condition to receive the needed blessing.

The following remarks of Henry Ward Beecher on this subject, are worthy of careful consideration :

"I think I may say that no part of ministerial preparation is more noble than that of singing and praying. We are indoctrinated very thoroughly. We are taught in the history of the Church and its order and discipline, but how much instruction do we get on the subject of prayer? I think the most sacred part of our ministry is praying. I can bear this witness

that in the study, in the most absorbing moments on the street, in those chance inspirations which everybody is subject to, when I am lifted up highest, there is nothing that is to me so touching, so inspiring, as when I stand in ordinary good health before my great congregation to pray for them. At times, when I have risen to pray and have glanced at them, I could not keep back the tears as I realized that there were so many hidden sorrows, temptations, and such histories. Indeed, I hardly feel as if I had anything to ask for myself; at no time do I get so far into heaven as in these moments. I can see my mother there. I forget the body and live in the spirit, and it seems to me as though it was permitted me to lay my hand on the very Tree of Life and shake down from it both leaves and fruit for the healing of my people. And it is better than a sermon. People have asked me if I ever write my prayers. I could not do it. Prayers must be voluntary, spontaneous, effluent as the atmosphere itself. If you cannot pray, do not be discouraged. All streams run small at first, grow better, deeper. Take more care of the inward man and then people will begin to say

of your prayers that they are more nourishing than they used to be. Then if men trouble and vex you, instead of getting mad you will pray. When troubles come, instead of saying that you have too much trouble, pray. If, when you are spoken about, if you find that tale-bearers in the community are about you, and you are annoyed and vexed, and there is scandal running around, pray, *pray*. That is the best way to head off little troubles, and when I hear a parish saying, 'Our minister cannot preach as well as some, but it is balm to hear him pray,' I congratulate them. They are not far from the gate of heaven." (*New Haven Lecture.*)

While speaking of pulpit service, I venture to refer to one or two practices which ought not to be overlooked, though not exactly in place at this point, to-wit: handling the Bible with violence and rudeness. Some pound it and throw it about as though it were anything but the word of God. The effect of this upon the people may be inferred from the remark of a man on hearing a new minister, namely, "I know he is a Christian by the manner in which he handles the Bible." Closing it, too, immediately after reading the text, is another mis

take. It carries the idea that the text is all you want of it, and having secured that, you dismiss it from the service. It is better to keep it open until near the close of the sermon, even if you do not wish to refer to it.

OF GIVING NOTICES.

The manner of giving the notices may seem unworthy of a moment's thought, but it has its influence. They are sometimes given so frivolously, that they detract from the good impressions made by the sermon, by showing that the preacher, after all, is not really so serious as he appeared in his closing appeals. Besides, the *emphasis* given to fairs, festivals and other social gatherings, while religious meetings are barely mentioned, gives the impression to outsiders that the former are of chief interest. All notices had better be disposed of before the sermon, in a gravity of manner becoming the place and the hour, and in much less time than is devoted to them. We have been tortured twice of late by unpardonable prolixity at this point, occupying *ten* or *fifteen* minutes each time after the usual hour of closing. "*Now*, my brethren," said the first speaker, "let me

have your attention to another notice for one moment," and in some such way he prefaced each item in the long list. The *briefest* announcement was enough for all, except one, which was of vital importance to the congregation.

OF LEAVING THE CHURCH.

Some preachers pronounce the benediction, and retire into a private room near the pulpit, while others leave with the congregation. The objection to the first method is, that there are generally Christians present who desire a personal word with their pastor. It may be the only opportunity they will have to see him in a month. This manner of dodging them, is liable to be construed into a want of concern for their welfare, and they will go home disappointed and grieved. We insist, therefore, that he should give them a chance to shake his hand, and be reassured of his pastoral regard.

Besides, it often happens that there are unconverted persons lingering about the house, whom he may never see again, to whom a kind word might be particularly useful. We remember several such occasions in early life, when we absolutely sought this attention from

the preachers, but in vain; and left, feeling that our spiritual welfare did not weigh heavily upon their hearts. It was by this means, too, that we secured our first religious advice. It came, however, not from a preacher, but from a pious woman. I was waiting after the meeting to be spoken to by somebody, and she was looking for some one to serve in this manner, and thus we met, much to my advantage. Where the minister and the church are in a proper spirit, fifteen minutes after the service devoted to religious conversation are invaluable.

I have elsewhere hinted at *levity* in leaving the house of God, in view of its prevalence in some places. Nothing can be more unreasonable or hurtful. It is a stumblingblock to sinners, that is not properly estimated. It, destroys communion with God, and practically stamps the profession of solicitude for the unconverted with falsehood. Trifling at a funeral in the presence of the dead, is not more unbecoming or absurd. It reminds one of the worshippers of Aaron's golden calf, who offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, "and rose up to play." (Exod. xxxii. 6.)

OF BAPTISM.

Some of you will be required to administer the sacrament of baptism, which furnishes an excellent opportunity for making good impressions; but is often solemnized in the most stupid manner. The baptism of a child, for instance, presents a fit occasion for advice with regard to training children for God. Also, for exhortation to unconverted people who were baptized in their infancy, to say nothing of other classes more or less concerned in the transaction. The baptism of adults is suggestive of other parties, and arguments in favor of a religious life. It should be made a joyous occasion to the candidates, who thereby renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil, and of incitement to others to repent and be born again.

Methodists wisely practice three modes, namely, sprinkling, pouring, and immersion, as candidates may prefer, believing that the validity of the ordinance does not depend on the *amount* of water used, but on the religious application of it, in the name of the "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." In this sentiment we are in harmony with the great body of Christian

Church, excepting Baptists, who baptize by immersion only, and make many converts to their views by baptismal gatherings, speeches, songs, and religious hand-shakings. Their baptisms are great occasions, and command crowds of people, where their other services often pass without exciting much attention; while Pedobaptists make little account of the ordinance, either spiritually or doctrinally. They administer it in the most quiet and hurried manner, without properly emphasizing its significance, and spend more time in proving the validity of sprinkling, than we think advisable, though *we* desire no other mode. Being a means of grace, it should be administered in expectation of an immediate blessing on the candidates and people.

The writer's practice, as pastor, has been to immerse all who prefer it, without making the least effort to persuade them to accept a more convenient form. At one time, being obstructed by ice in the harbor, he induced his officials to construct a baptistry, and immersed forty persons in it the first time it was used. This saved him much debate, and the converts the pain of leaving the church which brought them

to Christ, and going to the Baptists, for whom they had no sympathy, except in the matter of baptism, to be worried with Calvinism, and close communion through life.

Now, as we believe in the validity of immersion, it is reasonable that we should cheerfully baptize by this method, whenever it becomes necessary to the "answer of a good conscience" in the candidates. And as such occasions furnish an admirable opportunity for justifying our denominational sentiments and practice on the subject, we should improve it to secure the fruit of our labors. This is as much for their good as our own; and had this policy been heartily maintained by all our preachers, it would probably have saved to our church tens of thousands of converts, who left us, purely for the sake of being immersed.

OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

The benefits of this ordinance depend very much on the *manner* of its administration. Though commemorative of the death of Christ, it is not a *funeral* service, to be administered in sorrow and sadness. "Draw near with faith,

and take this holy sacrament to your *comfort*," says our Ritual. It is a *thanksgiving*. We are to feed on Christ, in our hearts by faith with "*thanksgiving*," and drink in remembrance of His blood, which was shed for us, "and be *thankful*," while we join with "angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven," to laud and magnify the glorious name of God, "saying holy, holy, holy Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of Thy glory." And all this is to be done with true repentance for our sins, with "love and charity" to our neighbors, and a new life, manifested by "following the commandments of God."

This service, therefore, brings to view, not only the death of Christ, but all its present and eternal benefits, and furnishes a fit occasion for the most profitable meditation, instruction and encouragement. It opens the whole field of human redemption, duty and destiny, and ought to produce a powerful impression on every heart. In some churches it is the great occasion of the month, and occupies a whole afternoon or evening, and closes with an effort for new acquisitions to the church. But to give it this character, some previous mental and

spiritual preparation is necessary, as in preaching and other public services.

As often administered, however, it amounts to nothing more than a sort of dry funereal ceremony, observed more as a matter of duty than pleasure. And to show how little importance is attached to it, it is appended to another service, and *hurried* through, to give place to something else. If the benefit to be derived were in the consecrated bread and wine, as claimed by Romanists, that might do ; but with us, these elements are only reminders of the atonement, which we are to apprehend by faith, placing ourselves in the necessary attitude to render it available to our salvation. The service should be conducted with solemnity and delicacy, but with intense earnestness, clearly showing the presence of the Holy Spirit.

OF RECEIVING MEMBERS.

The reception of members into the church is an event of vast moment, and should be consummated publicly, and with becoming ceremony. To say that "brother A. B., from —— church, has joined us by letter," or to read his letter, is not enough. It is too cold and infor-

mal to be impressive. So is it to say, "C. D. has stood out her probation," and give her the right hand of fellowship while reading the ritual. In any civil society, candidates would hardly feel themselves welcome, if received in so unceremonious a manner. It is not right. If the salvation of souls or joining the church, is one-tenth part as important as we represent it, the public renunciation of the world and affiliation with the people of God is entitled to a stronger manifestation of interest than this. Besides, the opportunity of impressing the candidates with their duties and privileges, is too precious to be allowed to pass with so slight attention. It indicates little of the "joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth," or of the spirit of the hymn, now so popular, called, "The ninety and nine."

I do not complain of our formula for receiving members, but I must say that it is not *warm* enough, nor *deep* enough, nor *broad* enough to meet my notions of the spirit and manner of the work. Pastors should stretch out beyond it, and give utterance to more burning words of love and encouragement, suggested by the oc-

casion, and their own joy in God. We once gave the right hand of fellowship to *one hundred and thirty-three* candidates in a crowded assembly, long before our Discipline made any provision for it, simply from our conviction of its appropriateness, and adaptation to make a deep religious impression. They had all been received publicly on trial six months before, and instructed as to their duties and privileges. Were we now to repeat the interesting service, we should invite all our officials, trustees, stewards, leaders, local preachers, exhorters and others, who might desire to do so, to follow us, and welcome the new comers, whether from probation or from other churches, with the same cordial shake of the hand. We suggested this measure recently on the reception of a smaller number, when not only the officials, but many private members, male and female, carried it into effect with admirable results. With such a greeting, the most timid and jealous stranger can hardly fail to feel at home with his new associates. It helps the officials and church also, by awakening in them stronger fraternal impulses, and shaking off the icy formality, too common even among Methodists.

There is another suggestion in this connection worthy of consideration. Our ritual, which we follow more or less closely, in receiving members, as well as in the baptismal and marriage services, provides for asking candidates several questions. It also furnishes the answers which they are desired to give, and which they ought to give, if at all, without being *prompted.* For instance,

"Have you saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ?"

Answer. "I trust I have."

To reply in these exact words, they should commit them to memory in advance, or have the book before them. Instead of this, some pastors read the question, and then say, "the answer is," etc., when the candidate repeats it from their lips. To our apprehension, this is extremely childish and awkward, and should never be done. If it be too much trouble to use the ritual as was intended, let the candidate give a nod of assent, or answer yes or no, with such qualifications as he may prefer. Others may not look at the matter in this light, but we confess to having felt profound mortification in

witnessing this puerile innovation upon our system.

OF SABBATH SCHOOL SERVICES.

It is hardly necessary to descant upon ministerial activity in this connection. The Sabbath school of Robert Raikes was simply educational, and taught reading, writing, etc., by *hired* teachers. That of John Wesley, taught *religion* as well, by pastors and *gratuitous* teachers. This, with his successors, is still the ostensible object of such schools, though we fear it is often lost sight of, in the interest of geography, biblical literature, singing, amusement, etc. If we will save the children, we must hold them to the subject. Everything should converge to this point, and be made as effective for immediate results as possible. Pastors should prepare themselves for this work as well as for preaching, and seek to move all hearts towards God.

We have referred to this point, because we fear some schools are operating against their proper objects. Children, if not teachers, are being trained in a way to alienate them from the Church. The Church is treated as a minor, and not unfrequently as a hostile concern, and

is more in danger from this quarter than from any other. We allude to schools which pay little regard to the regular preaching services. Noticing lately the almost entire absence of children in a certain church, we asked, "Where are your children?" "O," replied an official, "they go to the Sabbath school." In two other places, we learned that it was the practice of the teachers, many of them, to spend the hour for preaching in a side room, under pretence of consultation.

This policy will sooner or later ruin any church. Preachers should require children and teachers of their congregations to attend upon the ministry of the word, though they may be obliged to leave the school altogether. To make this pleasant for them, they should endeavor to preach in a manner to interest and profit them.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW TO CONDUCT PRAYER MEETINGS.

WHILE we find much valuable advice in our books relating to ministerial qualifications, preaching and pastoral duties, there seems to be a dearth of instruction as to the conduct of social meetings. This is, perhaps, a sufficient reason for the consideration of the subject at the present time. If another is necessary, it may be found in the fact that many pastors are strangely inefficient in this department of public duty. With good intentions, but erroneous judgment, they take a course directly calculated to defeat their object, and find it difficult to create proper interest in these useful means of church growth. In seeking to aid brethren in this difficult work, I invite attention,

I. TO SOME ERRORS TO BE AVOIDED.

One is frequently committed in not opening the service at the appointed time. Pastors can very easily establish their people in the miserable habit of tardiness by this means. On the

other hand, when it comes to be known that they go by the clock, many will make it a point to be prompt. Not all, for some were born out of due time, perhaps, and are constitutionally behind in nearly everything.

2. This error leads to irregularity in the closing, which operates to keep some people away, who, for reasons known to themselves, desire to be at home soon after nine o'clock. If they knew that the meeting would close at the time proposed, they would be present.

3. Many preachers occupy too much time. One brother of our acquaintance, and he is not an exceptional case, begins by reading a long hymn. Then he prays long, and reads another hymn, and a Scripture lesson or two, accompanied by remarks, using up most of the time, when he sits down, exhorting *all* the people to speak or pray, but to be "very short." Of course they have little to say, so, he talks again, and chides them for not being more active, and the absent members for not coming to the prayer meetings.

Others omit the lessons, but occupy nearly as much time in remarks, speaking often more than twice in the course of the evening.

We witnessed an extreme case of this sort sometime since, which we cannot easily forget. A zealous preacher led a prayer meeting, so called, and occupied nearly all the time himself, though there were many present who desired to participate. But what made his conduct especially provoking was, that he constantly exhorted the brethren to "take a part," without giving them the least opportunity. Though an interesting preacher, he killed the meeting and did not know it.

4. Some who are not chargeable with this error, *manage too much*. Opening in the usual way, they call upon one brother to pray, and then upon another, and so on, selecting their assistants to the end, by which means they tacitly invite others to keep still, though they profess to desire a "free meeting."

Few are so blind as not to see that this policy is proscriptive. Electing certain ones to perform the service, reprobates the rest, and no modest man, unless moved by the Holy Spirit, or some other influence less reliable, would venture to participate uninvited. We disapprove, therefore, of calling out individuals in this way, except in the case of visitors, who

would not feel free to speak on a general invitation.

5. Another class of preachers make their meetings free and less formal, but limit the exercises to singing and prayer. They pray and sing, sing and pray, without having, or at least indicating, any particular object. To some minds, and under some circumstances, such services may be interesting and profitable. But more thoughtful Christians dislike so much praying to no definite point. It looks to them like "vain repetition," or expecting to "be heard for much speaking." They love to pray when they feel or see a need that comes within the range of the promises, but do not like praying merely for the sake of praying. Meetings uniformly conducted in this way will necessarily become *monotonous*, even to those who sometimes like them. Besides, they fail to meet all existing wants. Those, who at times, care to speak only to God, at other times desire to speak to men, to their brethren and co-laborers in the church, or to unbelievers, and it is proper that they should have an opportunity.

6. Some go to the other extreme, and convert

their prayer meetings into religious debating clubs, announcing the subject in advance, which certainly cannot be approved by the more spiritual portion of their people as a practice. The newspapers show cases where they have been made occasions for discussing and settling church difficulties, which is too gross a diversion to be generally endorsed. Nor does it seem to be expedient to conduct them in the interest of a particular object, such as temperance, missions, holiness, etc., except when they are called specifically for that purpose. The *general* prayer meeting is common ground, and should be as little restricted as may be consistent with the public good.

7. *Sameness* is another defect to be avoided. Too many pastors drop into certain *ruts*, and fall under the delusion that any diversion is a *disorder*. The result is, they follow about the same course from week to week, and from month to month, doling out their old familiar prayers, until forsaken, except by a few who attend from principle. This is a great mistake. Preachers ought to take as much pains to make their prayer meetings fresh and interesting, as they do their pulpit services. And, when they

have a fair amount of ability around them, they may succeed. It only requires a little invention among Methodists, who hold to the largest reasonable liberty, to effect it. We have seldom seen a church of any considerable number of members, where there was not *buried* talent enough to make an attractive prayer-meeting, if properly developed. And we know several which possess only a very moderate degree of ability, whose prayer meetings are crowded.

8. We shall not do justice to this subject without referring to what seem to be errors in revival prayer meetings. Inquirers are invited forward and presented to God for pardoning mercy, in so excited and hasty a manner, as to preclude a proper understanding of the question. Seekers are generally under some misapprehension with regard to the conditionality of pardon, and need instruction. They are to be saved by faith. Some of them think that they are not in a right state of mind to be saved, or have not been seeking long enough, or that there is no mercy for them. The suggestions of the devil to one trying to break away from him and turn to Christ, are many and diversified, either of which may prevent his believing

unto salvation. Inquirers need to be examined and prepared for intelligent prayer, that they may not "ask amiss."

Faith is desirable, also, on the part of those who pray for them, but how can they believe for an immediate answer, unless they have some definite understanding of the condition of those for whom they pray. It is impossible, except in cases of special revelation. We have said, therefore, and now repeat it, after much reflection, that if we had but fifteen minutes to devote to inquirers, we would spend *ten* of them in *preparing* to pray. The success of prayer depends very much on our being in a proper Scriptural attitude, and spirit. It then becomes easy, and we may accomplish more in five minutes, than we could in hours, and days even, while out of position.

This fact is illustrated in the case of Elijah, in his memorable contest with the prophets of Baal. They prayed from morning even until noon, saying, "O, Baal, hear us." But there was no voice nor any that answered. Then they leaped upon the altar, and cut themselves with knives and lancets till the blood gushed out upon them, but all without effect. Having

made a complete failure, Elijah called all the people to come near to him, and deliberately prepared his altar, and sacrifice, and drenched them with water, that there might be no chance for deception. Everything being ready, all were anxious for him to pray, but he would not until the time of offering the evening sacrifice, prescribed by the law of God. Then he prayed "Lord, God, of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel" [that there might be no mistake as to the God he invoked], "let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel, and that I am Thy servant, and that I have done all these things at Thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that Thou art the Lord God, and that Thou hast turned their heart back again." This was the whole of it, and it was enough. "Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench." (1 Kings xviii. 30–38.)

The reason why so many prayers are unavailing is, that the supplicants are out of position, or have no just appreciation of what they need, and do not comply with the con-

ditions. Of course, prayer meetings, under these circumstances, can but be dead, and ineffective.

II. HOW PRAYER MEETINGS SHOULD BE CONDUCTED.

No rules can be given that will apply to all cases. Circumstances must be considered. Pastors who are properly interested in the religious welfare of their people, can hardly fail to have some idea of the particular good to be achieved by each meeting. It will be a matter of thought, prayer, and preparation with them, so that they will not rush in at random. They will have their opening hymns, etc., arranged with reference to the result contemplated.

The general order of procedure, which appears to the writer to be most appropriate, in ordinary meetings of the kind, is about as follows:

1. To read two or three verses of an appropriate hymn, unless they are perfectly familiar, when they may be announced by repeating the first line. The growing practice of not reading the hymns in public worship, seems to us an error, where a preacher knows how to read with

effect. Properly enunciated hymns often make a deep impression, especially at the close of a good sermon. Both hymn and tune should be familiar, so as to enlist all present in the singing. Much depends on a spirited opening.

2. After singing, let a short prayer or two be offered by the pastor, or by some one else, who shall volunteer at his general call. This will expose you to long, dull and inappropriate prayers, for a time, but if the leader shall set a good example, and particularly if he shall have a little private talk with his principal workers on the subject, they will soon come to understand his policy, and fall into line. It is not well for the pastor to make the opening prayer in every case, or generally. Few men have variety and copiousness enough to avoid sameness in thought and expression. Prayers of marked defects, coming from different parties, will be more acceptable to the masses.

3. As to the Scriptures, they may be read before or after the prayer, or not at all, as shall be deemed advisable. We do not believe in reading them at random in prayer meetings, merely because they are the word of God. They were all given originally for a purpose, and are

to be used for a like purpose. If the preacher will take time to select passages pertinent to the objects of the meeting, nothing could be more appropriate. And this is what he should do to suggest the line of thought which he desires to be made prominent. "A scribe instructed in the kingdom of heaven, bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old," to meet the demands of the occasion. (Mat. xiii. 52.) It is proper, too, for him to make a few remarks on what he reads, showing its application to the subject which he hopes to impress upon the people. But anything like preaching or a lecture on biblical literature, is out of place. The time should be given chiefly to others, and they should understand that the responsibility of the meeting rests largely on them.

4. The voluntary singing of another verse or two, without reading, may be properly followed by other short prayers, when the meeting should be fully opened in few words by the leader, to brief addresses, songs and prayers, as the worshippers may feel inclined. In *few* words, we say, because this is the exact point where pastors are apt to become tedious. They often

paralyze a meeting in trying to give it new life. This is about all you need to do in a well-trained church, except to preside and interject a word of remark, or a verse to be sung, till near the close. Then,

5. You should press sinners, if any are present, to come to Christ, and indicate their purpose to do so by rising or coming forward for prayers. Or, if the meeting chiefly contemplates the improvement of Christians, you may seek to commit them anew to the work of God by some significant expression, to be followed by instruction and prayer, bearing directly on the subject in hand. This plan avoids tedious singing, reading, prayer, and random talk, and brings everything to a practical result ; and can hardly fail to be interesting and profitable.

6. Finally, we suggest, that the meeting be closed in time to allow of personal conversation with each inquirer, and with others, as before indicated.

To adjust a church to this working order, requires considerable effort. Much may be done in some places by private communication with official members in their associate capacity. Where they are inflexibly cold and formal, and

will not act, we may go outside and enlist other members of less talent and influence, but with more heart and zeal. This is often done. There are many capable Christians in our churches, who seldom speak in public, because they have never been encouraged to do so. A little private cultivation from the pastor will bring them to the point, where they may exert a powerful influence.

In trying to awaken an interest in a community, where prayer meetings had been long conducted by a few old members, whose voices and opinions were as familiar as the tones of the village bell, and hardly so impressive, we privately proposed to a lady of excellent character to pray publicly. It was a great cross to her, but she bore it to the surprise of everybody present. She offered a remarkable prayer, and many were moved to tears. That was the beginning of wonders in the place. Other congenial spirits were soon by her side, and the work of God spread and prevailed mightily, until hundreds were converted. We have sometimes privately induced young men and women to volunteer and speak, or pray in meetings, much to their own advantage and the good of

the cause. In several instances we have gone further, and persuaded respectable sinners, who knew they ought to be Christians, to speak and openly avow their convictions, and ask the prayers of the people of God. Here was a *surprise,* which sent a thrill through the house.

Prayer meetings worked up in this way will generally be interesting. This was our usual order in a steady New England village for two years, to say nothing of other places. The population was changeable and consisted largely of females. We preached mornings and afternoons on the Sabbath, and held a prayer meetin the evening. The speaking talent of the officials was not remarkable. Yet, the prayer meetings were crowded to excess, and many failed to obtain seats. We seldom occupied ten minutes in opening, and had to spring for the floor to bring the meeting to a close. The time was improved by men, women and children in all parts of a large house, chiefly by ladies, who had been thoroughly converted to God, and had something to say. We trained them to speak and pray from the day of their spiritual birth, and several of them became mighty in word and in deed. We shall never forget their

eloquence. The meetings were quiet, without cant, orderly and interesting. The result was from five to thirty new members per month, aggregating over three hundred in the two years. The pastor often longed to speak more, but took up his cross and gave his beloved people a chance to breathe out their full souls in prayer, praise and effort for the conversion of others.

If some preachers, who are not distinguished for preaching power, would take more pains to organize and energize their prayer meetings, they would succeed much better. There should be an informal praying band of males and females in each church for *home work*. It would be a great relief to preachers, by saving them from the wear and tear of dead meetings.

But I would not restrict prayer meetings to this order, however good. Deviations are sometimes useful to prevent monotony. Being called upon lately to lead a prayer meeting embracing some three thousand persons, we commenced by speaking without singing even, and set about to ascertain the wants of the people preparatory to prayer. This brought out a large number, who desired to be converted, and many more who were anxious for a deeper work of grace,

two worthy objects entirely covered by the love and promises of God. After descanting at some length upon the legitimacy of our undertaking, and the reasonableness of expecting to receive then and there, nearly the whole assembly bowed before God, and were led in a rational, business kind of prayer, which seemed to place more confidence in the promises and power of God, than in the intensity of our feelings, or the elevation of our voices. The result was gratifying, and the repetition of the meeting was loudly called for.

The writer once commenced what proved to be a wonderful protracted meeting in a similar manner, by persuading three or four unconverted persons, all who were present, to come forward for prayers. Then we had something to pray for, and were in just the right state to ensure a successful meeting. If we had less generalizing in these meetings, and more practical work, it would be better for the cause.

Other deviations may sometimes be useful, but we will not particularize. Good sense and a profound desire for solid improvement, will suggest them. If preachers will try as hard to work up, and maintain interesting prayer meet-

ings, as many do to prepare good sermons, they will greatly improve their own standing and the prosperity of their people.

This suggests another thought. It is generally known that some preachers have recently been annoyed by the operations of independent itinerant "praying bands" of laymen. That these bodies have sometimes been imprudent, is not unlikely. Good men are not always wise. Going only where they are invited, they should be harmless. The demand shows a *felt* want of something of the kind. If preachers would train their own people to this same kind of work, and give them an opportunity to exercise at *home*, they would not be running off in this way, nor would there be any occasion for invoking aid from abroad, except in cases of positive weakness, or in new fields. The proper method of meeting the difficulty is, for preachers to inaugurate *live* prayer meetings in their own churches, which may be done with less effort than is expended on other enterprises of minor importance. Back fires of this kind naturally prove a sovereign remedy for such novelties.

CHAPTER X.

DUTIES AND DIFFICULTIES OF THE PASTORAL OFFICE.

We have thus far spoken chiefly of preachers as such, and of their public ministrations. The pastoral office involves other duties, and requires particular consideration.

The objects of the pastorate are the same as those of the ministry of the word, and should be kept steadily in view as in preparing or preaching a sermon. One who aims at the best spiritual results, will be fruitful in expedients for their accomplishment. He will be prompt to discourage propositions of an adverse tendency, and thus keep himself and his people out of damaging complications.

Pastoral skill is the main dependence of many preachers. Few have power to draw and hold a congregration by mere preaching. Most need the aid of the pastorate to work up personal friendship for themselves and their people, so as to secure a fair and interested hearing. Many

go to church more from their affection for the preacher, than from interest in his sermons. Hence, it often occurs that ordinary preachers have crowded houses, while abler ones are troubled with empty pews. On the other hand, attractive preachers sometimes effect little good for the want of pastoral influence. In view of these, and corresponding facts, we deem it appropriate to present the following suggestions:

1. Every interest of young ministers requires that they render themselves socially agreeable, so far as possible, without compromising the piety and dignity which belong to their office. To assume a monkish air, may be proper for papal priests, who claim special jurisdiction over the people by divine right, but it is both unbecoming and impolitic in Protestant ministers. A light and frivolous aspect is, perhaps, still more objectionable. It betrays spiritual unfitness.

Being the servants of all for Christ's sake, ministers should cultivate that acquaintance with the people generally, which will give them the greatest influence for the attainment of their ends. This requires much thought and self-denial. You will often find it necessary to

visit families, and greet individuals, in whom you have little social interest, purely for their good. It will please them, and they will reciprocate by attending upon your ministry, and bringing their families and friends with them. Methodism commenced its grand career by plunging into the depths of sin and poverty, not in poor dwellings only, but in alms-houses, jails, prisons, barracks and hospitals. It found many of its brightest jewels in dens of suffering and infamy. Even now, ministers who follow this Christ-like example, seldom lack for hearers or converts.

We have known pastors, who seemed to think it creditable to them, to be "short sighted," and "absent minded." Being accosted by people whom they really ought to recognize and greet, they would respond, "O yes, yes, I believe I do know you, but, but, I am short-sighted, and so forgetful of names—How do you do? Is your family well?" But this is a huge mistake, except in old men, whose sight and memory are manifestly impaired.

Most people think themselves of sufficient importance to be remembered, especially by their pastor, who has undertaken to look after

their spiritual welfare, and they are offended when they are not recognized. Young pastors, therefore, should seek to *mark* every individual to whom they are introduced, or with whom they become acquainted, to say nothing of others, so as to be able to recognize and *call them by name*, at their next meeting. They may not succeed at first, but it will not be long before they will be able to give general satisfaction in this particular.

Many wisely carry out this suggestion among the children and servants with excellent effect. Visiting a family, they enter the name of each member in their pocket memorandum, so that in a short time they are able to address them in a proper manner, or send their *regards*, to Mary or Bridget, or the hired man. Such attentions are generally appreciated and rewarded by personal friendship. It commands the love of the parents also. Nothing pleases them more than to have the pastor inquire after Tommy, Josie, and the baby, and notice them when present.

I think it desirable, too, for pastors to know something of the history, business and relations of their people, of their joys and sorrows, hopes and fears. It helps them in their conversation

and preaching. The public prayers of some preachers, tenderly touching the real felt troubles of their people, operate to their advantage.

But it is not enough to know all the people and their condition; pastors should cultivate a cordial and inspiring method of addressing them. It makes all the difference in the world how you do it. Brother A. is a good pastor, that is, he devotes a great deal of time to the work, and really loves his people. He is also an able preacher, but he is not popular, for the reason that he is sociably disagreeable. He shakes hands with his friends as if he were in the presence of the dying,—giving them the tips of his fingers, and withdrawing them at the slightest touch, showing that it is a mere ceremony, in which he has no interest. Indeed, he does it in a way to make the impression that he is "out of sorts," or has something against them.

Then, his conversation is of a kind to indicate dissatisfaction. He has a wonderful faculty of seeing the dark side of every subject, and chills more than he cheers, so that his presence is rather forbidding. He wants the people to come straight to church, and go

straight home again after the benediction. Of course, his church is sufficiently large to hold all who come to hear him.

There is another pastor in his neighborhood who sees and knows nearly everybody, shakes hands with each in the most cordial manner wherever he meets them, and makes them feel that he loves them with all his heart. We happened to see him lately on the street, trying to reach his house after the Sabbath morning service. He was then a block or two from the church, shaking hands with old and young, some of whom had been detained from meeting several weeks. What a time! How they enjoyed it! Making another start, he was directly surrounded by others, whom he greeted with the affection of a father, inquiring after grandmother, aunty and the rest. Bidding them an affectionate adieu, he struck again for home, but was overjoyed by meeting another group of old friends and members, with whom we left him.

That man is called the greatest *pastor*, not the ablest preacher, in the city where he lives, and has a large church crowded with members. He aims to turn everything and everybody to

account for God and *His* people, and pleases many by his amiable, earnest manners, for their good to edification.

You may say, perhaps, "I cannot do that;" but you can do something very much like it. You can make yourself agreeable. There should be *no* "*cannot*" in a young preacher's creed or thought, where duty calls.

2. You may promote your objects by pastoral visiting. We do not presume to say how often you should call on each family. This must be determined by yourself, in view of the circumstances. Once a year, or once a quarter may be sufficient in some cases, while once a week may be necessary in others. We might as well assume to determine how often a physician should call on his patients.

It is equally difficult to tell how extensively a pastor shall visit families not immediately connected with his church or congregation. This will depend somewhat on their character and proclivities, and not less, on his tact in procuring invitations. Where there is a settled purpose and fair capacity to win souls to Christ, much may be done in this direction. The field is susceptible of successful cultivation, and should

receive the special attention of preachers, who are wanting in hearers or success.

Nor is it for us to determine what a pastor shall do when he calls. Whether he shall converse with each person present about his religious condition, or make a formal prayer in every house, must be settled by himself. Some have made and followed rules on these points without regard to the condition of affairs, much to the discredit of their judgment, if not to the detriment of their cause. Good, sound common sense, with becoming zeal for the salvation of the people, are better guides in questions of this nature than theories.

Afflictions, of whatever character, would seem to call for the presence and sympathy of the pastor. Says Dr. Cuyler to "beginners," "Remember that your people have cradles in their houses, and sick beds, and are all of them men and women 'of like passions' with yourself." As people in poverty naturally imagine that they are lightly esteemed, and feel it deeply if neglected, pastors should undoubtedly give them special attention. Following the dictates of religion, and seeking to do the

greatest amount of good, they need not seriously err in this important part of their work.

The pastoral office gives a preacher peculiar advantages in bringing individual souls to Christ. Attaching his hearers to himself, they will receive private instruction and advice from him, that would be rejected coming from any other source. He can reveal all that is in his heart to them, and find out the secret obstructions that lie in their way, and remove them, and thus lead them to the open confession of their sins and faith in the Saviour. Many persons of rank, and pride of character, who seemed beyond the reach of public preaching, have been won by these means. Several of the most useful men the writer ever received into the church, were brought under his private tuition, long before they made any public show of repentance. He walked with them, rode with them, dined with them, and finally had the pleasure of leading them to Christ, as he intended to do from the first.

Pastors are too apt to be unfaithful to this class of men. They unwisely modify their preaching to accommodate their supposed opinions, and work into their confidence, but

for want of courage, they fail to use their influence to press them to the cross.

Some make a similar mistake with regard to the more intelligent and wealthy *members of the Church*, who do little or nothing to promote its spirituality. We have no doubt that they might, by kind personal conversation, bring many of them to the front in spiritual effort. Some of our societies, called aristocratic, have lately improved very much in this respect, under the pious influence of faithful pastors.

How much *time* should be devoted to visiting, can only be determined by the size and condition of the society. A great deal may be accomplished in a short time, by proper management. Good healthy pastors, generally visit all their families in a few weeks, after they get settled in a new charge. Others seldom if ever visit them, and would do no better, probably, if they were to remain *ten* years. They do not love to visit, except where they find congenial company, good fare, and *innocent* (?) amusement, and they are apt to visit such places too often, and remain too long. We do not blame them for their preference, but for following it to the neglect of the sick, afflicted, and poor, who need

their sympathy and prayers. They should rather follow *duty*, and go where they are needed, to exercise the tender ministries of their high calling.

Young preachers cannot realize how much they lose by this self-seeking policy. They generally lose their afflicted and neglected members, who justly spurn their public ministrations. They lose the confidence of their friends, who entertain them, and the community, who know well enough that they are *not* true ministers of Christ. And, what is still worse, they lose confidence in God, in themselves, and go to their pulpits condemned, unhappy and unprepared to meet the demands of their sacred position.

Mark it where we will, pastors who kindly and faithfully look after the poor and otherwise unfortunate, will have hearers. This circumstance alone creates a conviction in the community, that they are followers of Christ, whatever their name or creed. The same is true of those who reach out after the extremely wicked, and offer them religion as their only hope of reform and salvation. There is a heroism and self-sacrifice in such efforts, that commands the

confidence, and even the admiration of reputed unbelievers.

We saw this illustrated many years ago in a very wicked place, which had long been kept in the back-ground religiously, by a leading business man, who claimed to be an infidel. A liberal Methodist in a neighboring town, thought that we ought to make an effort to start a church in the place, and pledged more than half enough to support a preacher, if one should be sent. Being presiding elder of the district, we selected a beautiful young brother, and the bishop appointed him. He arrived a stranger, without a church, parsonage or people, save a few scattered Methodists, connected with distant societies. He opened his mission in the second story of an engine house, adjoining the village cemetery. The infidel heard of the movement, and put in an early appearance, intending to suppress it. But the dear good preacher stated the situation, his objects, and plan of procedure, and asked for sympathy and coöperation. It was a new thing, and so manifestly unselfish and kind, that nobody could object. Even the infidel approved, and went into the town meeting, and moved that they

should repair and seat the town house for the use of the stranger, saying, "If there is any religion in the world that will benefit the place, I believe that young man has it." The house was soon put in fine order, and was thronged with interested hearers, among whom, the infidel occupied a prominent place, and led in the support of the new enterprise.

It was the *humanity* of the movement that impressed him. That young man went out after the poor and friendless, and inspired them with hope. If pastors would fret less about "the wickedness of the wicked," and lay themselves out in personal effort to bring them to Christ, they would have more friends, and greater success. Our history is so full of grand achievements of this sort, we ought not to doubt, where everything seems to be against us.

Says Dr. Cuyler to young preachers, "Aim from the start to be thorough pastors. During the week go to those whom you expect to come to you on the Sabbath! In the morning of each day study books; in the afternoon study door plates and *human nature*. Your people will give you material for your best practical sermons. After an effective Sunday work, go

around among your flock, as Napoleon rode over the field after a battle, to see where the shot struck, and who were among the wounded. . . . Always have a good tract or two in your pocket, and a kind word on your lip. Be sure of this, that every person, high or humble, likes personal attentions."

3. Pastors may aid their interests by organizing little societies or bands for different departments of Christian action. It will relieve them when overtaxed, and give others something to do, who may be suffering for the want of work. Churches flourish best where all the members are recognized as co-laborers. If nothing is required of them, they will soon get the impression that they are considered of little account, and become dissatisfied.

It is remarkable how isolated one can live in the midst of friends. Many have left the Methodists, strange as it may seem, and gone to other denominations to find *society*. They claim that they were not noticed, that no one visited them, or seemed to care for their souls. Not a few who remain, have something of the same feeling. Pastors may do much by example and advice to relieve this difficulty, though they

will sometimes find cases that will tax their utmost endeavors. I am not quite sure that they will not do well to appoint a committee of *officials* to shake hands with strangers in our larger congregations, and make their acquaintance. A trustee informed me, the other day, that he lately felt moved to speak to a gentleman, who occupied a pew near him, and ventured to do so. The stranger thanked him very heartily for the recognition, saying that "he had occupied the pew for *two years*, and had never been thus noticed before." The next Sabbath the same trustee approached another man a little further back, who was equally gratified. He also spoke to his wife, when she immediately began to weep, which so alarmed the trustee that he apologized for his impertinence. "O, no," she replied, "I am not afflicted that you spoke to us, but I am overwhelmed with thankfulness ; we have been here regularly for a year, and you are the first one that has spoken to us at all."

These circumstances put a new thought into the old trustee's mind, and he resolved, that that splendid congregation should suffer no more for want of official courtesy.

There are many in every community who belong to *no* congregation, and seldom attend public worship. Some of them were brought up religiously, but coming among strangers, have never reported themselves. Others live as they were trained, without God and without any well grounded hope. They would be offended, perhaps, if a minister should visit them. But were *the* pastor to organize a band of brethren to do so, and seek to bring them to church, or hold meetings among them, much good might be done. They are as promising candidates for religion as thousands of our best members were a few years or months ago. These brethren might, at the same time, distribute our impressive tracts, and thus reach many they do not see.

A similar combination of the most pious and gifted ladies might be formed to converse with and pray for the unconverted, and urge them to immediate repentance. We have known this measure to be particularly effective. Sinners generally have more confidence in ladies than in gentlemen, and hear them more readily. Besides, ladies have special aptness to persuade, and often carry their points where others fail. Fortunately for us, our church has provided for

all this, in the adoption of "*The Ladies' and Pastors' Union.*"

4. Some pastors display peculiar wisdom and tact, in seizing upon special occasions for the furtherance of their objects. They see God in every impressive event, and construe His providence into a fresh call to duty. Fire and flood, sickness and death are promptly pressed into their service, and are made to incite the people to holy living. They are not averse to funerals or *funeral sermons*, but turn them to account, by extending their acquaintance, and multiplying their influence for good.

They adopt a similar course with regard to public movements in which they have not the fullest confidence. If they cannot endorse them, they contrive to neutralize their bad effect, and make them the occasion of some fresh expedient for good. A minister needs much wisdom in such circumstances. He is liable to imbibe a bad spirit, and become entangled in party conflicts. We would not say that he should never come in collision with public sentiment, for duty may sometimes require it. But, before doing so, he ought to weigh the matter well, and be sure that he is right. The writer has run several

frightful risks of this kind during his somewhat protracted ministry, where he knew his officials had not sufficient light to endorse his measures in advance, and, therefore, he did not consult them. But after the first gun was fired, and they saw the issue in its proper character, they were ready for action. It is a mistake that ministers should be the mere *echo* of public opinion ; they should *create* it on all moral and religious questions, in conformity to the word of God. Had Nehemiah followed the popular current, or the judgment of his temporizing advisers, the walls of Jerusalem had never felt his transforming power, or the pure worship of God been reëstablished. The people will honor a man who dares to risk everything for what he esteems to be right and duty. Churchmen of England mobbed John Wesley for a while, but afterwards swung their hats in his praise, and gave him a place among their nobles.

6. The question of union with other sects is one of the most difficult that young pastors have to meet. Formerly it was not a question. The older denominations wanted no union with us, nor would they have any. Now, we are courted, and flattered, and pressed on all sides

for union, which often means, that we suspend our peculiarities, and accept those of others.

To indicate to what extent this is being carried, and how disastrously to our work, we have but to refer to current events. In our recent evangelistic labors, we have hardly gone a week without being interrupted by some pre-arranged union meeting, for which we had to stand back, or give offence. In one place, where we had some sixty cases of inquiry, and many conversions in nine days, we left, to make room for certain Union Evangelists. They came and labored several days with little effect. The pastor has since informed us that it took him a week to get the work back to where it was when they commenced.

The captivity of some brethren to this entangling cry of union, is indicated by another fact. In leading a large Methodist meeting of late, we were urged to invite several ordinary ministers to preach, simply because they belonged to other denominations. One of them was a *lay* preacher, of a church which regards us as clerical usurpers, and would not allow our bishops, even, to occupy their pulpits for one moment. And this was done, notwith-

standing the presence of several of our regular ministers, who had not preached at all. We failed to see the propriety of sacrificing the interests of the meeting in this way. But at two similar meetings, not far away, laymen of other churches were made prominent, though several of our pastors were present, and ready for service. It is not necessary to add that they did not enjoy the slight.

We say this, not from enmity to other denominations, but from a settled conviction that they are so widely different from us, that we can do more good to work in our own way, and on our own ground. The moment we unite with them, we are under restraint. Besides, in recognizing them as God's people, we endorse certain prevalent practices among them, which our Discipline forbids, and for which we excommunicate our own members. And, finally, where there is any fruit of union efforts, we generally share lightly in it, as the facts of the last ten years abundantly prove.

Pastors are liable to be embarrassed, also, by other *unions* relating to moral questions, which bring them into a kind of fellowship with irreligious people, who have no church interests to

subserve These new friends often project measures which interfere with our duties, if not our principles, and demand that we coöperate. Pastors should have it understood at the outset of all such connections, that they will not be diverted from their legitimate work, to assist in any other enterprise, however commendable, though ready to coöperate, within certain limits.

7. Firm adherence to our distinctive means of grace, will save us from many of these outside annoyances, and contribute largely to our fundamental objects. These abandoned or ignored, it becomes a matter of little importance whether our people retain their connection with us, or go to some other denomination. In this event, they and our converts also, will naturally consult the church relations of their ancestors and kindred, their social and business interests, which, in view of our denominational minority, itinerancy, political and financial status, etc., will take them away from us, though converted at our altars. If we are going to be a people, and bring the world to the saving knowledge of God, we must stand by the principles and measures which have made us all that we are.

Here we are *strong*, and can cope with the universe, but the moment we exchange them for more popular ones, our power, if not our occupation, is gone. There will be no *room* for us, and if we attempt to live, it will be under great disadvantages. We always make a sad failure in trying to imitate our neighbors in spiritual work. But where we maintain our own peculiar spirit and measures, and leave others to do as they please, we generally succeed; sinners are converted and cleave to us with unutterable affection, though cast off by their friends. Besides, when it is seen that we have the right spirit, and show that we are really doing the work of God, earnest Christians of all churches will gravitate toward us, and contribute to our cause.

OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE.

This is another department of duty especially devolving upon pastors. Its objects are, to protect the Church against the bad influence of defective members, and worthy members against damaging suspicions and reports. He is the best disciplinarian, who harmonizes most differences, binds up the most broken hearts, soothes

the most sorrow, inspires the discouraged with hope, and holds the most believers to the cross and the Church. He seldom expels a member, never indeed, until all kind reformatory measures are exhausted. To save one who is tempted and in danger of backsliding, is about equal to converting a common sinner. Yet we have been amazed to see with how little sorrow of heart some pastors cast members away. If any are anxious to know what becomes of our converts, we commend the practice of many in this particular to their consideration. But we have some experts in this kind of work, who lose few from any list of probationers that may be put into their hands.

But after all, offences will come under the best of circumstances, and pastors will be obliged to administer discipline. It is, therefore, important that they fully understand their own system of jurisprudence. Not only that they may do justice to the parties involved, but do it in a manner to protect themselves against the claims of the civil law. In some churches offenders have rights, which pastors are bound to respect. The latter are required to administer discipline according to their own rules, and

the law will protect them in doing it. But if they censure or expel a member contrary to said rules, they are liable to be arraigned on a civil process, and fined. Preachers cannot be too careful in this kind of pastoral work. With so many helps as they now have to a proper understanding of the subject, they ought not to make serious mistakes.

OF PARLIAMENTARY USAGES.

We refer to this subject for two reasons.

1. That ministers are often called upon to preside over deliberative bodies, and in doing so gain or lose influence, as they show themselves competent for the work, or otherwise. It is not unusual for them to disgrace themselves in trying to preside, for the want of knowing the order of business approved by common usage. On the other hand, many appear nowhere to so good advantage as in the chair, because they are masters of the situation. They not only know the rules, but can justify them.

2. Our second reason for calling attention to the subject is, that full information is nearly as necessary in debate, and the transaction of conventional business as in the general direction

of it. To be successful here, one needs to understand the rights, duties, and privileges of all parties, or he will soon be making motions and speeches *out of order*, and be put down. We witnessed a painful instance of this kind recently, where a young man assumed to do a good thing that properly belonged to another, of which his competitor took prompt advantage, and seated him in dishonor. Had he spent a few hours in reading the simplest rules of parliamentary usage, he would have carried his point with considerable credit.

Methodist preachers have so much to do with public business of one kind or another, they should seek to be thoroughly informed in this particular. "Knowledge is power," and often controls against fearful odds. "Baker on the Discipline," furnishes the more common usages in few pages. "Cushing's Manual" is a complete work, and should be carefully studied by preachers, who propose to take a leading part in public conventions.

CAUTION IN RECEIVING MEMBERS.

It is laudable in pastors to desire to multiply their members, but unless they are inflexible in

their purpose, not to receive unsuitable persons, it may prove a temptation to them, and lead to many evils. There can be no doubt that some have welcomed rich men, whom they would have rejected had they been poor. This sometimes helps the finances of the church, but not always. Where the new comers are so liberal that they pay most of the bills, and leave the poorer members to pay little or nothing, they are often a damage rather than a permanent help. For, when they die, or take offence and leave, it comes hard to those who have done so little, to supply their lack of service. *Covetous* rich men reach about the same result in another way, they afflict the church by their meanness, and block the wheels of progress. Both classes are elements of spiritual weakness, and contribute to defeat our legitimate objects by conforming the church to the world. The less of such members we have, the better for our cause. They will resist the revival of God's work, if it shall interfere with their practices, or their notions of respectability.

There is often carelessness, too, with regard to other classes. They are received without due regard to their spiritual character and purposes.

Their views of religion are below the Gospel standard. Judged by their spirit and practice, they do not "renounce the world, the flesh and the devil," and if received, will lower our religious *status* to the extent of their influence. If such people must join some church, they had better go where their worldly practices will not be objectionable.

Methodists can do nothing without vital religion—the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit. When we lose this, and drop down to the level of formalists, we are the deadest of all people. Our arrangements were made for live men, live themes, and live work. The Spirit gone, we still have a fine system, but it is like a finished locomotive, without fire or steam.

CHAPTER XI.

USE TO BE MADE OF THE PRESS.

THIS subject might have been considered in the last chapter, and dismissed with a few brief paragraphs ; but in view of its importance, and the almost total absence of instruction with regard to it in our homiletical works, we feel compelled to give it a broader and more extended notice.

We have elsewhere urged young preachers to *write*, not sermons to be read or recited, but as means of literary and mental training. We would now in passing, advise them to write for the press such scraps of thought, fact, or argument, as in their judgment will be useful. If they are valuable, some one of our numerous publishers will put them in type. A word in season, thus sent forth, will interest their friends and be sure to benefit somebody. Most of our distinguished authors commenced their literary career in this way.

Pastors should also exercise careful super-

vision of the *reading* of their people, and "with faithful diligence banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God's word." (*Dis.*, p. 320.) "It is made their special duty to decide as to what books shall be used in our schools." (*Dis.*, p. 250.)

But who regards this? If some preachers were to examine their Sunday school libraries, they would find books which should have no place in the house of God. Thus, while they sleep, the enemy sows tares among the children. Romanists, Mormons, and other heretices, are wiser, and truer to their principles in this particular. Let us learn of them.

Some are equally careless with regard to the periodicals which their people read. They set the bad example of taking such as are antagonistic to vital religion, and make little effort to introduce better ones among their members. Thus, again, while they sleep, the enemy sows objections to Methodism, and apologizes for sin, until the faith of many is shaken, and they leave the church, or assume a mere nominal relation to it. How a minister can pursue this course, and escape the conviction that he is false to God and His people, is unaccountable

Common propriety would indicate that we should press into our service such periodicals as will subserve the avowed objects of our ministry, and exclude others of an opposite tendency so far as possible.

But the main object of this writing is to speak of good *books*, and of the use to be made of them. Their power, as instruments of usefulness, can hardly be overestimated. The singular part they have played in the history of Methodism, should preclude all doubt as to their value.

John Wesley was made a thorough churchman and formalist by his education. When about to receive deacon's orders, he was awakened to see his unfitness for the duties involved, and led to prayer and study. In the course of three or four years he became intensely religious, according to the light of his times. His own account of the means by which he reached this state, is given in the following extracts:

"In the year 1725, being in the twenty-third year of my age, I met with Bishop Taylor's 'Rules and Exercises of Holy Living and Dying.' In reading several parts of this book,

I was exceedingly affected with that part in particular which relates to *purity* of *intention*. Instantly I resolved to dedicate all my life to God ; all my thoughts and words and actions ; being thoroughly convinced that there was no medium, but that every part of my life must either be a sacrifice to God or to myself, that is, in effect, to the devil.

"In the year 1726, I met with Kempis's 'Christian Pattern' . . . A year or two after, Mr. Law's 'Christian Perfection' and 'Serious Call' were put into my hands. These convinced me more than ever of the absolute impossibility of being half a Christian. . . . In 1729, I began not only to read, but to study the Bible, as the one, the only standard of truth."

Thus it appears that he was awakened and converted by reading books. Many years afterwards, when nearly blocked in his operations by the errors of his education, he read "Lord King's Account of the Primitive Church," and was saved from another Romish folly. "In spite of my vehement prejudice of education," he says, "I was ready to believe that this was a fair and impartial draft." So he went on

reading himself out of trouble, and into usefulness to the end. Charles Welsey, Mr. Whitefield, and their compeers, read the same books, and were similarly affected. The immortal Dr. Coke, a young church priest, was made a Methodist by talking with Maxfield, and reading Fletcher's inimitable "Checks."

Seeing the power of the press, Mr. Wesley commenced early to write new books, and abridge and improve old ones, to adapt them to his work, and really originated the *Tract* cause, which has since grown to such mammoth proportions. And he *sold* books, too, and required his preachers to do the same, wherever they went. And, before the introduction of so many periodicals, they did so, both in Europe and America, and often effected results by this means, that could not have been achieved by preaching or personal conversation.

The adaptation of awakening books and tracts to produce conviction and repentance, is generally conceded, though but partially appreciated. Multitudes have been saved by reading them. Serious persons sometimes demur at our measures, perhaps at some point of doctrine, or are disturbed by the prejudice of education. In all

these cases, a book or tract, covering the exact point of difficulty, will often bring deliverance. The same is true of bad habits, such as intemperance, profanity, or Sabbath breaking. And fortunately for all concerned, there is hardly a difficulty of the kind that has not been ably discussed in book form. Nor is there any great lack of means for the distribution of such works.

Methodist preachers are especially required to educate converts in the doctrines, polity, usages and history of their church, because most of them were trained under other systems. But we fear this duty is not properly discharged. Under ordinary administration, converts are received on trial without much ceremony, and are assigned to classes, after which little is heard of them, until they are recommended for full connection, or reported backslidden. Of course they have the benefit of the classes and other means of instruction, by which they must acquire some valuable information. But considering that they are representatives of God and Methodism, they ought to be thoroughly trained. It is necessary to their stability and usefulness. It would seem to us appropriate, therefore, for the pastor,

1. To direct their attention to a course of religious reading, suited to their circumstances. Our net incloses persons of all nations, educations and conditions. The majority of those who come to us were brought up in prejudice against us, and are in danger of being led astray.

The writer was trained under the influence of rigid Calvinism, which he could not accept as either merciful or *just*. He soon repudiated it, and assumed that the decree of election, if such a decree existed, must cover the whole race, or God could not be *good* or just. Soon after a change of location brought him near a Methodist church, where he heard different doctrines, and met another style of Christians, under whose instruction, he sought and found, what he felt to be the "pearl of great price," and was completely *satisfied*. Being invited to join the church, he declined, until he should know something more about its principles and polity, and see how he would be able to justify his action to his old friends. This led the preacher to advise him to read certain books, such as the "Discipline," "Doctrinal Tracts," "Clarke's Commentary," and "Fletcher's Checks," all of

which, with several smaller works, he devoured with unutterable delight and profit.

Our young people should be made to understand every part of our system, and the grounds and harmony of the whole. They cannot *love* it unless they see its divine authority and appropriateness, and, of course, cannot defend it against the objections of dissenters. They will be obliged to say as many now do, "Though I am a Methodist, I do not believe in the itinerancy, class-meetings, camp-meetings," etc., which must be very mortifying to people of decent self-respect, and encouraging to those who watch about our altars to find and fold the vacillating of our flocks.

Considering that we have so many books in condensed form, which present these subjects in a clear and forcible a manner, it is surprising that so little effort is made by pastors to get the people to *read* them. Many rather encourage the delusion that there is *now* no great difference between us and other Christians, whereas most of the churches remain in creed and polity, about as they were forty years ago. If our doctrines and economy are of any importance, and there is any intention on our part

to maintain them, we ought certainly to encourage young people to read, so as to enjoy and maintain the ground they profess to occupy.

Romanists, Mormons, Episcopalians, Presbyterians and Baptists, give their peculiarities special prominence. Their people are thoroughly drilled in the arguments employed to sustain them, so that many who cannot read at all defend the "apostolic succession," "baptismal regeneration," "the infallible perseverance of the saints," "immersion," etc., nearly as well as their pastors. And if these are eternal truths of the commanding importance claimed for them, this is *right* and proper to be done. Episcopalians gain most of their accessions from other sects by *books*. Pastors keep them on hand to lend, or for sale to those they propose to draw into their fold. It is a very kind thing to ask a young man to read a beautiful book, and then to inquire of him how he likes it, and suggest his reading another. Unitarians publish books representing their views, not to lend only, but to *give* to hopeful candidates, who will read them, and they have their agents at work scattering them abroad over the country. If Methodism is the grandest system of doctrine,

practice, experience, and evangelization in the world, as we believe, how can its divinely appointed pastors neglect to scatter its expository and inspiring pages among their people.

METHODS OF SUPPLYING BOOKS.

Preachers are generally too poor to give away many books; they can hardly obtain what are necessary for their own use, and how to furnish the people with any considerable number, is a question they find it difficult to solve. Many object to selling books, for the reason that it will injure their influence. To meet this seeming difficulty, we reply.

1. If you were to undertake it as a speculation to make money for yourself, you would probably find it detrimental to your reputation, especially, if you were to carry them about as a colporteur. I cannot blame stationed pastors for hesitating to do this. But this is not the only, or the better method. We never enjoyed selling books, as a pastor, but still we circulated many with good effect.

2. If pastors would treat books as they do our periodicals,—call attention to them publicly and privately, proposing to order them if

wanted, they would avoid the difficulty suggested, and accomplish the object successfully. In our first considerable revival, while young in religion and Methodism, we received more than one hundred into the church, mostly strangers to our doctrines and economy. It was evident that they needed educating in divine things to render them useful. We first conversed with them about their reading, and asked their attention to certain books, which we had found very profitable, suggesting that they purchase one or more, and thus lay the foundation of a personal library. The idea struck them favorably, and they inquired where they could get the books. We knew of none nearer than New York, and agreed to send for them when it should appear how many were wanted. This pleased them, and they respectively ordered such as came within their means, varying from one to half a dozen in number, and in cost from fifty cents to ten dollars. Having completed the canvass in this manner, in connection with other pastoral duties, we sent our first order to the Book Concern, and soon after received two or three large boxes, costing nearly as many hundred dollars. Announcing that the ordered

books had arrived, the subscribers called and paid for them, and took them away.

As to the result, we can only say, that several of the purchasing young men just graduated from boyhood, have been the main support of the church, and are now wealthy and intelligent Christians, and talk of their first purchase of religious books, as having had much to do in shaping their course, and establishing their character.

3. Five years after, the Lord poured out His Spirit in another place, and converted many gentlemen in married life, and in easy circumstances. We took the same course with them, recommending the purchase of "Clarke's Commentary on the Bible," as a good investment for the education of their children. *Nine* of them ordered full sets, and *one* a copy on the New Testament. These were sent for at one time, and delivered, as in the other case named, and, no doubt, did much good in the families concerned.

4. While stationed in Boston, near our Book Room, we used to encourage the people to read. Finding an interesting book, which seemed appropriate to them, we would take it into the

pulpit, and state its character, tendency and price, saying, if they desired a copy, and would give the sexton or the pastor their names to that effect, we would order them sent to the vestry where they might get them. Waiting a week or so for the orders, the agent forwarded the books, which were delivered by the sexton, and paid for.

We might mention other methods, but these must suffice. Where there is a will, there is generally a way. As to the influence of right books, little need be said. Let us consult our own experience; what have they done for us? Much more than periodicals. These are scrappy and incomplete. A right book covers the whole ground, answers objections, and is more likely to be fair and unpartisan. We have known a few copies to arrest desolating evils in a short time.

Not many years ago, a Congregational church in New Hampshire was surging under a *politico*-religious excitement, which had overthrown more formidable bodies. Said the pastor, after the danger had passed,

"I feared that we should break up, and go to ruin, and did not know what to do. Hearing

of the issue of a work exposing the wickedness of the party involved, I proposed to the Methodist preacher that we would send and purchase one hundred copies, and divide them between us. In a few days they came to hand, and I took my fifty home and *hid* them. As I went out to visit, I slipped a few in my pocket, and left one at each house where I thought it might be appropriate, in a private way, saying nothing to anybody. They were soon gone. A little after, one of my most infected officials called on me to express his alarm on the subject, naming another brother, whom he feared was getting considerably alienated. Soon another shaky member appeared, and he was filled with solicitude, and so it went on, until every man righted up, and the church was safe ; but the coming of the books remained a profound secret with us, the two pastors."

If preachers would use more books and tracts in correcting dangerous and exciting errors, instead of opening fire in the pulpit, they would often succeed better, and save themselves a world of trouble.

CHAPTER XII.

OF EXHORTERS, THEIR ORIGIN, USE AND PRESENT IMPORTANCE.

WE refer to this class of church officers here, because they are public speakers, and candidates for the ministry, and are entitled to more consideration than they have lately received.

"To exhort," says Webster, "is to incite and encourage, by words or advice; to animate or urge by arguments, as to a good deed or any laudable conduct or course of action; to advise, warn, caution."

The office of exhorter was established by Mr. Wesley, for the double purpose of suppressing some over-zealous people, who, it was thought, ought not to speak in public, and to bring out others who might do so to the profit of many, but were too timid and modest to attempt it without special encouragement. Hence the order of 1784: "Let none preach or exhort in any of our societies without a note of permission from the assistant." (*Emory's History of*

Discipline, p. 151.) As a suppressing measure, it has had little effect in this country, the prevailing sentiment being favorable to *free speech;* but it has undoubtedly been useful in the other direction, it has encouraged and developed many young men into effective speakers.

But for certain reasons it has been declining in usefulness for many years, until some begin to question the propriety of retaining it as a distinct office. Indeed, it has been lately proposed in the General Conference to amend the Discipline by striking out all relating to it. But it seems to us wiser to magnify it, and make it useful:

1. Because we have much less real exhortation in our social meetings now than formerly, and they are suffering for the want of it. Few, if any, being especially charged with this work, no one feels particularly responsible for it, and it is not done. If any have a mind for it, they are afraid of being thought obtrusive, or imagine that others might do it better, and therefore maintain silence. Were they to be licensed by the church, it would encourage them, and they would seek to prepare themselves to do it with effect.

2. Because exhortation in the pulpit has largely declined. John preached many things to the people in his *exhortation* (Luke iii. 18.) Paul gave the people of Macedonia "much exhortation." (Acts xx. 2.) So our fathers preached with powerful and pungent exhortation, urging their hearers to immediate faith and action. But how little we hear of this now in ordinary sermons! The great object of most preachers seems to be to *instruct* the people and *defend* the Gospel, as though that will save, without bringing it home to their hearts. This alarming change in our style of preaching creates a demand for *exhorters.*

It is this dearth of exhortation in the pulpit that gives pious praying-bands and private individuals such popularity and crowds of hearers. Preaching is too often the product of the *head;* exhortation is the outgushing of the *heart.* The aim of the former is to teach, that of the latter to *impress* and urge to duty. The preacher *explains,* the exhorter cries aloud and entreats. Many are anxious to educate preachers, but who tries to *help* exhorters. The church, we think, is suffering more to-day for the want of burning exhortion, than for intellectual culture

3. Another reason for maintaining the office is, that there is ample room for its exercise beyond our church lines. Hundreds and thousands of out-lying villages and towns seldom hear the Gospel. The people are poor, and are not in condition to make a fair appearance at church, and have nowhere to sit were they to go. Let a couple of earnest, devout exhorters go and start a meeting among them, and they will attract attention, command respect, and get an invitation to come again. Then, there are many places where we ought to establish churches, and could do it easy enough with three or four exhorters from the surrounding towns. A little engineering in this direction by the pastors and presiding elders, would put Methodism on the aggressive again, and restore its power.

4. The office is necessary, also, as a means of training our young men for usefulness. It is one of the great questions of the day, how we shall retain them in the church. Our answer is, give them something to do. Train them to work for God. License the best of them, and make them responsible for sustaining little meetings in private dwellings, school-houses,

and groves, and they will take care of the others This will be likely to set them to reading, thinking, praying and living near to God, that they may acquit themselves well, and win souls to Christ. This is the way many of our older preachers graduated to the ministry. They were not made, they grew from very small beginnings by exhortation and prayer, to be men of might. And we have thousands of young men now, who might excel them under similar training, because they are better educated, and have many facilities for improvement the fathers never enjoyed. It would keep them from sin, and give them spiritual and intellectual power. Church lyceums, and other associations for oratorical reading, speaking, etc., are miserable substitutes for it, in every sense. They tend to fashionable worldliness and consequent spiritual death, and often hinder more than they help their members, or the church itself. Personal improvement—the ostensible object of these appliances—is more likely to be acquired by direct effort to do good.

5. Some seem to have the impression that this license is designed for those only who are intending to become preachers; but this is a

mistake. Many have held it for years, who never will preach, and some who have advanced to the ministry, had better have remained exhorters. God made them for that work, and they would have been more useful and better satisfied, had they continued in it. If each pastor would *train* a class of exhorters, male and female, to help him in the prayer meetings, not to the exclusion of others, and then give them time to speak, it would send new life through the church.

6. The office is also important in order to insure an official leader for regular social meetings in the absence of the pastor. Who is to take charge in such a case? Do you answer, the official members? Which one of them? Each has his respective duties, and several may be competent to conduct the service, but they have no authority. One in each society, at least, ought to have an exhorter's license for this purpose, if for no other. It would save the loss of much time, as the reader can readily see, by adverting to his own unpleasant experience in waiting for some one to "open the meeting."

In a word, the possibilities of usefulness in

the office are immense. Preachers are restricted by clerical customs, but exhorters are untrammeled. They may read, explain, advise, warn, caution, encourage, and incite to duty by all Christian means, without wandering from their orbit. They assume to speak, because moved by the Holy Spirit, and are expected to be in dead earnest.

The church abounds in young men of natural adaptation to this work. Why should they not be encouraged to exercise their gifts? This is our old method of filling vacancies, and raising supplies for the pulpit. Wesley found eighteen exhorters at Sithney, most of whom were useful. The others proved to be unworthy, and were dismissed. To be efficient exhorters, young men need,

1. To have the witness of the Spirit to their own personal acceptance with God, rendering them happy in His service. "The joy of the Lord is their strength." Without it they cannot shine so that others will see their good works, and glorify their Father which is in heaven.

2. They need to seize upon all opportunities to acquire knowledge and power in their work.

Idlers seldom succeed in any good thing. Exhorters who seek earnestly to understand God's plan of government, and to acquire capacity to explain and justify it before the people, will sooner or later command attention. To this end, they should be careful listeners and close observers, marking the verbal errors and uncomely gestures of others to avoid them; and their excellences to imitate them. When they hear a word the meaning or pronunciation of which they are in doubt, they should consult the authorities, and settle the question. The use of our "*Pronouncing Bible*" will save them the necessity of referring to other books for the right expression of Scripture names. Some good theological dictionary will aid them. But they should use such helps as they have or can get, and wait for nothing. Being determined to speak and pray well and acceptably, God will guide them to success.

3. These preparatory measures should be accompanied with *practice*, in class and conference meetings. Young Christians make a great mistake in waiting till they know more, and get more confidence before they try to speak. As well may a child postpone trying to walk and

talk, until it grows to maturity. Power to think and speak in public, is acquired by practice. Most converted young men feel more at first than they can express. The presence of a congregation confuses, if it does not paralyze them. Their best thoughts vanish like frightened birds. But if they commence to exercise their gifts in this manner and persist in it, they will reach a point, where they can think and speak better on their feet, and in a crowd, than under any other circumstances.

4. While we would not encourage young men to be obstrusive by speaking where they ought not, and more frequently and lengthily than is suitable for beginners, we would especially caution them against declining *invitations* to participate in religious services, on account of the "*fear of man.*" Many have crippled themselves for life in this way. It is no uncommon method of denying the Master, and always brings condemnation to a conscientious heart. You had better make the effort, if you utterly fail. It will humble you, at least, and do good by its sincerity, if not by its weakness. Our best scholars and business men began small, and worked up by slow degrees, after many blunders

and defeats. The opposite course is fairly represented by the cautious mother, who warned her little son "not to go near the water until he had learned to swim."

The advantages of determining to prosecute these active measures, are many.

1. Assuming to be co-workers with God in saving souls, you will feel doubly bound to *live* in all good conscience before men. It operates in advance, as a restraint against sin and impropriety. You will say to yourself, "I am going to speak for Christ, and must, therefore, live accordingly." Then, having urged others to piety, you will be ashamed not to practice it yourself. Thus, you will be kept at first by your *purpose*, and afterward by your *profession*.

2. It will prove a means of grace to others. Christians are always encouraged by hearing young men speak and pray, though it may be in weakness. Besides, sinners are often awakened by such means, where the abler appeals of ministers are ineffective. The fact that they can speak at all in public, carries conviction to their hearers, that God is with them. . But if there be any doubt about it, the further facts that they claim to be new creatures

in Christ, and to be happy in God and in His service, and that their lives and spirit indicate that a marvellous change has taken place in them, will settle the question, and demonstrate the divine reality of religion, more than the profoundest reasoning.

3. This course will protect you also against backsliding. Many converts die in infancy for the want of some such training. Born and educated in worldliness, they cannot maintain the formalities of religion without its sanctifying power. They need to be led right into daily communion with God, and into Christian activity, or they will become ensnared by some cunning device, and carried away captive into their old indulgences. They cannot sin a *little*, any more than a toper can drink a little. Total abstinence is their only safety. Others may seem to live, and not abandon the church, while they are spiritually dead. But live young men, whom God has endowed with the gift of exhortation, must speak out or go back to the world. Fully consecrated to this work, they cannot fail to be valiant soldiers of the cross.

CHAPTER XIII.

OF LOCAL PREACHERS.

It is a remarkable fact that a majority of the ministers of Methodism are local, not pastors. Our latest reports show but 29,206 pastors or itinerant preachers, to 74,960 local preachers. The difference between the two classes in the *Methodist Episcopal Church is less*, there being at the close of 1878, 11,308 itinerant preachers, to 12,449 local preachers, and this difference seems to be diminishing in this branch of the Wesleyan family. Whether this is ominous of good, is worthy of consideration.

Our founder, Mr. Wesley, knew no *minister* at the first, who had not been regularly graduated to the office, according to the order of the Church of England. But God in His gracious providence introduced others, who were so manifestly useful and necessary, that he felt obliged to recognize them. They immediately became helpers to the pastors, and preached as they had opportunity. He says, "We had no

oversight of this, we had the deepest prejudice against it, until we could not but own that God gave wisdom from above to those unlearned and ignorant men, so that the work of the Lord prospered in their hands, and sinners were daily converted to God." (*Works*, vol. v., p. 156.)

In coming to what we propose to say of local preachers, it is necessary to state a few familiar facts:

1. That their services have generally been gratuitous, like those of exhorters, leaders and other local officers, except in the matter of travelling expenses, and where they have acted as regular supplies, or have devoted *secular* time to their work, in other services. On this account, many small societies have been furnished with regular preaching, and have thus been nursed into strength to support a regular pastor. Many of our best churches began in this way.

2. Another fact is, that where they have been encouraged, as in this country formerly, and in England now, many have become very able ministers. The names of Maxwell, Nelson, Webb and others in English Methodism, are household words with us, because they led the

way in this infringement on church order; but others of whom little is heard were equally distinguished. Silas Told, a converted sailor, and Matthew Mayer, to say nothing of others, were veritable heroes, and shook the country around them for a long distance. The latter established prayer meetings in every direction. "At Davyhulme, he gathered fifty converts into classes in a few weeks, and several useful preachers were raised up by his labors. Wesley encouraged him to go about preaching to the poor, and for twenty years he went up and down the land with surprising success." (*Stevens' His. of Methodism.*)

"Methodism was established in this country by local preachers, Embury in New York, Webb in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, Strawbridge in Maryland, Neal in Canada, Gilbert in the West Indies, and Black in Nova Scotia. Its whole frontier march, from the extreme North to the Gulf of Mexico, has been led on by these humble laborers. The history of the denomination affords a lesson in this respect that should never be forgotten by Methodists while Christendom has a frontier anywhere on our planet. They have been accustomed to consider their

"itinerancy" the preëminent fact of their history; they have demanded that all things should bend in subordination to this, and they have never exaggerated its importance, but they have failed to appreciate both the historical and prospective value of these humbler functions of their system." (*Ibid.*, vol. ii., p. 139.)

Licensing a man to preach, however, does not make him a preacher; he must have *practice.* Few men will prepare a sermon, until they see some probable chance for preaching it. When our British brethren license a man they put him on the "plan of appointments," with old and strong men. He sees the emergency, and often, with much prayer and mental application, seeks to meet it. *We* license one, and leave him without work, to plan for himself. The result of this difference is, English local preachers *preach*, while many of ours do not. Their's become strong men, and find little difficulty in entering our conferences, where there is an opening, while many of ours are seldom heard from.

3. This state of things with us, is not alone chargeable to local preachers. Our people have been too persistent in demanding stated pas-

tors, and the conferences too liberal in gratifying them. These errors have necessitated another, namely, the multiplication of *travelling* preachers. Hence the moment a man of fair abilities has appeared in the local ranks, his friends have beset him to join the conference, often, without due regard to his health, family, adaptation or temporal circumstances, and thus many have been hurried out of a good business, into poor stations that could not support them without great embarrassment, where their chances for doing good are really less than they enjoyed as local preachers. Gleaning the local ranks in this way, and then replenishing them with incompetent itinerants, has lessened the necessity for this class of preachers, and reduced their average ability, while it has overwhelmed many of our small societies, and not a few travelling preachers, with financial burdens. The arrangement was well intended, but nevertheless, a disastrous mistake.

In view of these circumstances, some brethren have come to the conclusion that local preachers are no longer necessary, and seem inclined to suppress them. But we cannot sympathize with this view of the subject:

1. Because there are multitudes of churches in our older conferences, that are unable to support regular pastors. They are so reduced by removals to cities, frontiers, and other attractive points, that they are proper missionary ground, and must become extinct, unless they shall be formed into small circuits, with one pastor, and more or less local assistants; or shall be supplied altogether by a local agency. Some such arrangement will bring this class of helpers into greater demand, on the old basis, and save our weak societies from dissolution.

In fact, they are already doing this very work; and if they were to subside, there would be alarming vacancies in our appointments, which could not be filled. Dr. Wheeler, one of the number, has lately furnished some figures on the subject, that are very instructive. Assuming that the phrase *to be supplied*, found so often in conference minutes, means a local preacher, he reaches the conclusion that 1,381 of this class are doing regular pastoral work. He also shows, that 450 others supply vacancies occasioned by the sickness or death of pastors during the year; and that it requires 400 more to meet the demand created by the temporary

absence of pastors for a Sabbath or two each. These facts, taken in connection with much other work done by these preachers in jails, prisons, reformatories, alms-houses and other places, fully demonstrate the utility of the order.

2. Another reason for maintaining the office is, that there are many neighborhoods suffering for the want of the pure Gospel, where we have, as yet, no existence. If the doctrine of free and full salvation from sin and hell, is as important as we claim, these places ought to be put under immediate cultivation. To go into many of them on *union* grounds, is to present an *emasculated* Gospel, and shut ourselves out, perhaps, forever. To send travelling preachers to them is impossible, without missionary money, which we cannot spare at present, for that purpose. Surrounding preachers feel that they have no time or strength for this work. Our natural and *only* dependence is on exhorters and local preachers, and we need no other, if we will give them proper attention. If Embury, the carpenter, planted our standard in America, and erected the first of nearly *sixteen thousand churches*, a little over one hun-

dred years ago, and his colaborers and successors pioneered many of our existing societies, we should not distrust these men, but urge them "onward—right onward!"

Going in the spirit which characterized their honored predecessors, they will receive a cordial welcome in many places. School-rooms, private dwellings and forest shades, await their coming. At least, Whitefield's old pulpit, the horse block, will be accessible to them everywhere, without the brick-bats which formerly endangered it.

But Methodists generally, we believe, have no idea of abolishing this branch of their ministry. The General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, in 1876, took action, looking toward its reinvestment, which has resulted in the adoption of the following.

COURSE OF STUDY.

1. Let candidates for license to preach be examined in the common branches of an English education, and on their general acquaintance with the Bible and the doctrines and usages of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

2. *First year.*—The Bible—History. Bin-

ney's Theological Compend Improved. Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

To be read.—Scripture History—Old Testament—Smith's. Watson's Life of Wesley. A Hundred Years of Methodism—Simpson.

3. *Second year.*—The Bible—Doctrines. Wakefield's Theology—First three books. Christian Baptism—Merrill.

To be read.—Scripture History—New Testament—Smith's. History of the United States—Ridpath. Ruter's Church History—1 vol., 8vo.

4. *Third year.*—The Bible—Sacraments. Wakefield's Theology—Last four books. Christian Perfection—Wesley's Plain Account.

To be read.—Wesley's Sermons—Vol. 1. Introduction to the Gospel Records—Nast. D'Aubigne's History of the Reformation—In one vol., 8vo.

5. *Fourth year.*—Review of the whole course. Written Sermon.

To be read.—Wesley's Sermons—Vol. 2. Porter's Compendium of Methodism.

This may seem to require more of some aged, busy, hard-working men, than they can compass, and perhaps it does. But pious examin-

ers, who take everything into account, and look to the piety and utility of the candidate, more than to his literary attainments, will, no doubt, deal tenderly with useful applicants. A worthy brother, who makes himself felt by his ministrations, will not suffer in such hands. But if our average local preachers will follow the "Rules" prepared by Mr. Wesley for his "helpers," they will find ample time for all this and more. He says:

"Be diligent. Never be unemployed a moment. Never be *triflingly* employed. Never while away any time; neither spend any more time at any place than is strictly necessary.

"Be serious. Let your motto be, 'Holiness to the Lord.' Avoid all *lightness*, jesting and foolish talking.

"Do not affect the gentleman. You have no more to do with this character than with that of a dancing-master. A preacher of the Gospel is the servant of all." (*Works*, vol. v., p. 219.)

With regard to study, and the acquisition of knowledge, the call to the ministry, the construction and delivery of sermons, and other matters applicable to local preachers, I refer

you to the preceding chapters on these topics. You stand exactly on a level with travelling preachers in many respects. In a few particulars your condition differs. For instance:

1. You have less time to devote to study, and therefore need to limit yourselves more fully to the subjects of your sermons. Some pastors, we have no doubt, read many things that cripple their pulpit ministrations. *You* have only time to read what will help you.

2. Not preaching often to the same congregation, you fortunately need a *less* number of sermons. Except where you become a regular supply, a few will be sufficient to meet every demand, so long as you can keep up your own interest in them. And not being subject to parochial customs, which require frequent special sermons, you will naturally limit yourself to the stirring themes, which awaken people to thought and reform. So that, on the whole, you have sufficient time to devote to each sermon, though actively engaged in business.

You ought, therefore, to determine on preaching *live* sermons and good ones. We have elsewhere, suggested that every sermon should be thought out and preached through privately,

before being presented to the congregation. Who is in better condition to do this than the man of *routine* business, which is so familiar to him as not to require much thought? Some kinds of business forbid this, they need constant attention; but we have few Christians, and less preachers, in these employments. Most local preachers who walk with God, and cultivate the habit of praying and thinking along the street, and at their work, will find time enough to prepare just such sermons as they ought to preach.

Professing to be especially called to bring sinners to Christ, and having little to do with the government of the church, you should *aim* in every sermon to win a soul. This will keep you out of vain speculations, which are the curse of the pulpit, and insure more or less success. Our early ministers did so, and seldom failed. Preaching in this way to fill vacancies, our local preachers will soon receive calls enough to occupy all their spare time.

There is another point which should not be overlooked. Local preachers, having little official responsibility in the churches to which they belong, sometimes give less attention to

the social meetings than is desirable, or creditable to them. This is an error. They need these means of grace for their own spiritual improvement, and preparation for preaching. Our best thoughts and impulses often flash upon us in social meetings. Besides, if preachers neglect these meetings they are sure to be suspected of coldness, if not of bitterness of spirit.

In conclusion, dear brethren, allow me to make a few further suggestions:

1. In all your exercises, be *yourself*. Do not try to imitate anybody. God has given each of you a peculiar style of mind, and of address. Maintain it and be *natural*, never trying to be finer or coarser, than you really are. Correct all bad, or questionable habits, however, as you detect them. Imitations are generally disgusting, especially in religion.

2. Be *earnestly religious* in your spirit and purpose. Methodism is *life*, or it is nothing. Its general forms are no better than those of others. Its *peculiar* methods are awkward and offensive, unless they come burning hot from the heart. This is our *forte*, the secret of our power. Others can be as orthodox,

learned, and pleasing as we. If you will live in the Spirit, and walk in the Spirit, and *feel* the "*joys* of salvation," which give "songs in the night," you will be always wanted, and find work to do.

3. Avoid all damaging complications with the world. If you stand firmly to your principles, the world will not covet your fellowship. Popularity gained by surrender, is ruinous. It may bring you some friends, but not of the Christian sort. Watering your religion to accommodate sinners is the worst kind of inflation. Your condition is favorable to the highest independence, and the best influence. You earn your own living, and are candidates for nothing but heaven. Why not speak and act freely, according to your own pious convictions ?

4. Be *active*. Do something for God and man every day, that shall be worthy of the preacher. Pray in secret, pray in your family, attend the prayer meetings, the Sabbath school, and preach when you have an opportunity. If others object, do not abuse them. Be loving and kind. Cultivate that *charity* which "suffereth long, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked."

Be *happy in God.* A *happy* religion is the need of the age.

If local preachers will take this stand, the days of their power will speedily return. Will they do it? Will you do it, my brother? May God help us all to honor our high calling as never before, and go forth filled with the Spirit, to bring the world to a *joyful* hope of eternal life.

CHAPTER XIV.

OF OTHER CHRISTIAN WORKERS WHO PROPOSE TO SPEAK MORE OR LESS IN PUBLIC.

IN preparing the foregoing pages for preachers and exhorters, we have kept steadily in view a large class of Christian workers, who are not preachers, and do not aspire to be, but who, nevertheless, may and ought to become good public speakers. They have no idea of their capacity, and would beg to be excused if approached on the subject; but still, what seems to be impossible to them, is possible with God, with their coöperation. Many of our ablest preachers were very unpromising candidates, when they first opened their mouths in public, and reached their present eminence easy enough, by improving their opportunities. The same is true of many laymen. They were children once, but have grown to be men, by using what talent they had, and seeking more.

But how little has been done to encourage and help Christians in this particular? We

have given them the usual invitation, perhaps, to participate in the social meetings, but what have we done to prepare them to do so, or to assist them in the difficult task? While the preachers have had line upon line, here a little and there a little of caution and advice, the laymen seem to have been left to feel their way along alone, and without any special aid, as though it were of very little consequence how they speak, or whether they shall speak at all.

In view of this fact, I have deemed it expedient to adapt this work to laymen, as well as preachers. What I have said of study, preparation and delivery, may inure to their advantage, if they will take the trouble to read it. It certainly is within their comprehension, and may be carried into effect, to the extent of the time which they have to give to the subject. If they take no pains to prepare themselves, they will become dry and uninteresting, like idle preachers, who plod in the ruts of their old sermons. Many have reached this point already. They say about the same thing from year to year; quote the same Scriptures, and sing the same hymns, all in about the same style. Why? Because they make no effort to improve.

Others read some religious paper, and gather up many new facts and illustrations. They read instructive and inspiring books, and ponder them ; the Bible, in particular, which seems ever new, and thus they become impressed and expand. When they speak again in public, they naturally report their new discoveries and inspirations, and the effect of them upon their own souls. We call to mind many Christians of this class, farmers, mechanics, mothers, factory girls, and apprentices, who are pretty fully occupied with labor and care, but notwithstanding, they get time to read a little and think more, and turn all their acquisitions to account for God and His cause. They are always welcome in the social meetings, because they never fail to say something new and pertinent to the occasion.

But to compass this work, it must be undertaken "with a *will*." Christians find many things to divert their attention. The present demands for amusement are exorbitant, and must be resisted. You need to read solid books,—books concerning God and duty, not the useless trash of fashionable periodicals, or the false and fascinating stories of novelists, but

something that will add to your stock of information, and furnish material for instruction and encouragement to others in conversation and public discourse.

Is it said that Christians read more than formerly? we admit it, but not the Bible or religious books. They read the daily papers, and thus keep the run of murders and amusements, while they gain little in useful knowledge. If they will be effective as speakers in the church, they must be well informed, as to its history, principles and measures. And to be so, they need to come "out from the world" in their *reading*, and give special attention to spiritual subjects. This is equally necessary to a right state of heart. No one can be a happy Christian, so long as he lives in fellowship with frivolous books. That fellowship has silenced millions, who once rejoiced "to tell the story of Jesus and His love." It not only deadens the religious feelings, which render speaking delightful, but it leads to heart corruption, and actual sin, however well meant. Those who maintain it, are "like men strolling through a district infected with fever, heedless of the invisible arrows of disease in the air; or they may

be compared to the River Thames, which is a sweet and pretty river enough near its source; but in the great metropolis [London], it has kept company with drains and sewers, under the belief that its current was too powerful to be injured by them. It was meant that the river should purify the sewer; but instead of that, the sewer has corrupted the river."

Besides, you must be filled with desire to do good. Aimless efforts are necessarily feeble ones. The soul must be set on some worthy achievement. One *supreme* idea is enough to draw you out in appropriate action, if it fully absorbs your heart. You had better have a *hobby*, than to be aimless; but you should be ready for every good word and work. The sweep of your plans ought to be as broad as the atonement. Then you will be interested in all that pleases God.

The greatest obstacle to the growth of young Christians in this direction, is their *unbelief*, as to the possibility of ever being able to speak in public. Mrs. Van Cott, whose heroism is unquestioned, was so timid when converted, that she did not enter a class until the leader promised to excuse her from speaking. The

thought of attempting it, horrified her. Multitudes are in similar condition. They do not know themselves, the power of God, or the philosophy of Christian progress.

Young Lincoln, the rail-splitter, did not dream of being a lawyer, much less, the President of the United States ; nor did Wilson, the shoemaker, see in himself or his surroundings, any reasonable ground to expect that he would be Vice-President ; but both of them determined to do their duty, hoping to become something more than the common average of their craftsmen. So they denied themselves, and by reading and study, became great and useful men. If Christians will imitate their industry they cannot fail to attain to distinction among their fellows.

But when you attempt to speak, be modest and simple. Never try to be grand, eloquent, or jocose. Speak what you *feel* and know. If you are overcome with emotion, stop, and wait until you can command yourself. Do not go on muttering what nobody can understand. Silence, under such circumstances, is the highest kind of eloquence. No tones or language can equal it. Methodists are to-day, more in

need of *feeling* than thought. They lack tears more than science. A baptism of this kind would lift our hard-going speakers and churches into the height of success. The *tongue of fire* would be the death of small and cold meetings, and crowd our altars. And this generally comes of self-denial, and consecration to God.

"'Tis true of souls. They gather strength
With every cross they bear;
With every humble sacrifice;
With every heartfelt prayer;
With every conflict bravely met,
And trial bravely borne;
With every throb of anguish felt,
When tender ties are shorn."

But, my brethren, do not place too much account on feeling; it is not everything. You need to observe your *manners* in speaking, as well as your intentions and impulses. We have reminded preachers of certain bad habits in the pulpit, which detract from the acceptability and usefulness of many. You are liable to something of the same sort. We call to mind one intelligent brother, of other days, who would hardly begin to speak, before he would make such a racket, in trying to clear

his throat, as to throw the congregation into a titter. It was the worst case I ever knew of the kind. Many speakers do something similar, particularly when they falter for the want of a thought or word. A few make use of uncommon expressions which they do not know the meaning of, apparently to seem wiser than they really are. This is ridiculous. The less pretentious Christians are in efforts of this kind, the better impression they make. Kind, simple, earnest words are usually most acceptable in social meetings.

For further particulars with regard to speaking, bad habits, etc., permit me to refer you to what we have said to preachers in the preceding chapters.

THE MISSION OF WOMEN IN THIS CONNECTION.

Christianity, however imperfectly presented, redeems woman from many evils imposed by heathenism. Under the clear light of John Wesley's exposition, it lifted her to a higher sphere, and made the "dumb to speak." Becoming conscious of possessing an immortal soul, which many had denied her; and what is still better, a soul renewed and sanctified by

the Holy Spirit, and filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory, she naturally began to

"tell to sinners round,
What a dear Saviour she had found,"

and burning with desire that others might enjoy the same blessedness, she ventured publicly to

"point to the redeeming blood,
And say—'Behold the way to God.'"

This was shocking to old theories, and even to Wesley himself, who was still in bondage to church order, but it was so manifestly of God, that he felt obliged to submit, and allow the ladies of his societies to speak publicly in the way of testimony and exhortation. But he never gave them license to *preach*. Yet, when in the providence of God, several of them were drawn out in this direction, he did not forbid them outright, but rather put them under some restriction, and encouraged them to go forward. Mary Fletcher did really preach, without seeming to do so. She did not go into the pulpit, but stood on a low platform, to avoid giving offence. Dinah Evans did about the same. One who heard her, wrote: "She was a burning and shining light. She preached with great

power and unction from above to a crowded congregation. . . . Simplicity, love and sweetness, were blended in her. Her whole heart was in the work. She was made instrumental in the conversion of many sinners."

But these were exceptional cases. Most ladies limited their addresses to five or ten minutes. Ann Cutler spoke but little in public, yet she was a great revivalist. Dead societies would wake right up under her marvellous prayers and private labors. "This," says Bramwell, "was a very great trial to many of us; to see the Lord make use of such simple means, and our usefulness comparatively but small."

The ladies of Methodism have enjoyed about this degree of liberty ever since. Few have assumed to preach, and they have met with little opposition. Many have engaged in public prayer and exhortation, and have done good service. The greatest obstacle respectable and pious women have encountered in the work, has been found in their own timidity and indisposition to make themselves thus prominent. Multitudes have done little or nothing of the kind, who might have been more useful and

happy, had they been more thoughtful and active. Regarding public speaking as a privilege, rather than a *duty*, they have neglected it, except under the most favorable circumstances. The object of the present writing is, if possible, to make the sisterhood of the church feel their *responsibility*, and give the full weight of their influence to the cause of Christ.

Looking at the facts in the case, we find that our prayer meetings are generally carried on by about the same persons from week to week, and they, few in number, and often of less ability and influence than many who say nothing. The result is, the meetings are dull, monotonous, and small in proportion. Now, if one, or half a dozen ladies were to come forward, I do not mean to the altar, but to rise and speak what they feel, and pray with a heart burdened with solicitude for the prosperity of Zion, it would give such meetings new life and power. The preacher and officials would feel encouraged, and become doubly efficient. Such an example would arouse other inactive members, and attract sinners, who always appear when the meetings become earnest and

impressive. This is the uniform result of such movements. Poor, struggling churches have thus been vitalized and lifted into public notice and favor.

And, when ladies have gained this point, they usually go a little further, and persuade people to come to church, and seek the Lord, in which they are remarkably effective, when properly engaged.

But why urge ladies particularly to speak and act in this way? Many think they ought to maintain profound silence. We answer:

1. Because they speak *less*, in proportion to their numbers, than men. Being naturally more timid and modest, they dislike to offend the prejudices of others, and have not been pressed into the service so much as we think the cause of God demands. In our opinion they possess a vast amount of unoccupied talent, that ought to be developed and applied to spiritual work. We rely on them very largely for singing, sociables, festivals, Sunday school teaching, and finances, and they show remarkable skill in these departments; why not encourage them to equal activity in speaking and prayer?

2. Because they possess an indefinable influence, over men particularly, which commands special attention to what they say in a womanly spirit and style. The outcry of a woman thrills the nerves of all people within hearing, as that of a man does not. The *singing* of ladies forms the great attraction of popular concerts. They are the charm of public amusements. Caterers for patronage understand this, and take advantage of it at any cost; and draw crowded houses. Why should the church ignore their great power, in seeking to please men for their good to edification?

The influence of the sex is well stated in the following truthful lines:

"Woman's warm heart and gentle hand, in God's eternal plan,
Were formed to soften, soothe, refine, exalt, and comfort man,
And win from pleasure's poison cup to life's pure fount above,
And rule him as the angels rule, by deeds of peace and love."

SARAH J. HALE.

3. Ladies are usually more pious than men. They excel in religion, men, in sin. They predominate in churches, men, in prisons. As

we have before shown, earnest, heart piety, is essential to effective speaking, and other spiritual efforts. Few church-going ladies think of speaking, till they *feel* deeply ; men often speak from habit or profession, without much regard to feeling,—expressing their *opinions*. Besides, men mixed up in business and politics, are readily suspected of sinister motives ; modest women command full confidence. They are believed and confided in, as most men are not. The conviction is natural and logical, in view of their timidity, that they would not speak at all, unless moved thereto by some heavenly influence. Hence, they are heard with attention, and their words are received as the truth of God. Thus tens of thousands of strong men have been awakened, converted, and saved under the loving, artless appeals of devout women, where the eloquence of the pastor and his official advisers was powerless.

4. We urge this duty, because ladies excel in persuasion. Men argue, women entreat. Men speak from Sinai, women from the cross. One threatens, the other weeps. The impression speakers produce is largely the result of what they feel. Here, too, ladies have the ad-

vantage, they are more sympathetic and tender. Their hopes and fears are stronger, heaven and hell more *real*, and they think and speak of them, not as doctrines, but as *facts*.

5. Because ladies have more time to prepare for the work. They are generally at home, within reach of books, and have time to meditate and pray, while most men are away occupied with business, and embarrassed with the presence and ridicule of the ungodly. Then, women generally have more time to attend the meetings, and enjoy the advantage that comes from the communion of saints.

But it is hardly necessary to extend the argument. We hope that our ladies will consider the matter seriously, and with much prayer, and see if they are doing all that God requires of them, in this line of action. I may say for their encouragement, that the old prejudice against ladies speaking in public, which used to be very embarrassing, has largely passed away. Many churches that once held it to be the height of indelicacy, if not a positive sin, have come to tolerate it in their own members. Indeed, they call upon ladies both to speak and pray, and believe the practice quite consistent

with the teachings of St. Paul, which, in other days, formed their chief argument against it. In fact, their ladies do not wait for this ceremony, but exercise the largest liberty. For Methodists to flag under these circumstances, after having fairly won the field, by a long and tedious fight, would be disgraceful.

What we have said to exhorters and other lay speakers with regard to preparation, is equally appropriate to ladies, so far as they have time for it. We will therefore close the chapter with a few remarks on the *manner* of speaking:

1. Speak so as to be *heard*. Here is where many ladies fail. If they do their best in this particular, nothing is clearer than that God has not called them to speak to large assemblies. One who attempted to preach a few months ago in a Congregational church in this city, occupied a chair on the platform, and talked under her projecting bonnet, in low and modest tones, very well, we presume, but not half of the people could distinctly hear one word in five. This is intolerable in a preacher.

Some talk in this manner in prayer meetings and love feasts, with their heads bent forward

and downward, and, perhaps, a handkerchief over their mouths. Others turn their back to the congregation, and talk a little to themselves in private. This is useless, so far as the people are concerned, except that it may please them to believe that the speakers are on the Lord's side.

2. Speak as Christian *ladies*, earnestly, but with the utmost kindness and affection, never sarcastically, or censoriously. Any approach to the masculine style will mar your effort. Nor is it becoming in you to be *boisterous*. Men may *storm*, and often do so, to little purpose, but you will succeed better by being *calm*. Weep, if you feel like it; it will not injure your influence or your cause. It is natural for ladies to do so when overwhelmed with love or pity. But be deliberate and thoughtful, even here.

3. Do not undertake too much. Consider beforehand, what is most appropriate to be said, if practicable, and confine yourself to that, unless something manifestly better shall occur. If you lose your main thought, which is no uncommon event, with young speakers, do the best you can in a few words, and take your seat. Anything is better than a long rambling

speech to no point. Should your mind rally, and the vision return, try it again. Two or three short pertinent speeches may be useful, where they would be tedious if combined in one.

4. Avoid controversy. This is bad enough in men, but it seems worse in women. Relate your experience, tell what you have seen and heard to your advantage; encourage, exhort, persuade, entreat. Talk of love, faith, hope and heaven. These thrilling subjects furnish you a wide range. But women have been known to become interested in some particular theory, and fall to *debating* in social-religious meetings, where their views were not generally accepted. This practice, besides being a little disorderly, wears a shade of unfairness, and creates a prejudice against the speaker and her theme. Millerites, Perfectionists, and other partisans, have often rendered themselves odious by this means.

5. If you are oppressed with hypo, and everything seems to be going to destruction—a morbid state of mind into which good people sometimes fall—you had better not attempt to speak. The unbelief of most meetings is sufficient without any augmentation from this

quarter. The proper place for such light, or whatever it may be called, is "under a bushel." The less you let it shine before others, the better it will be for them and the cause of God. A little attention to your bodily health, and much secret prayer, will improve your condition, and the deception under which you are suffering will vanish.

6. Speak in harmony with the character and objects of the meeting. As we have said elsewhere, all meetings should aim at some specific result, which ought to be indicated, if not expressed in so many words, by the opening services. It is desirable that each participant should see the point, and contribute something to it. But it not unfrequently happens that hobbyists broach other subjects, and try to divert the current in another direction. Their motives may be correct, but they are out of place, then and there. So, where a meeting seems to call for talk, we have known persons disturb this order by going to prayer. Of course, nobody can object to it, but still it is not just the right thing to do, and the intruder is suspected of lacking good sense, if not pious intentions.

7. Be prompt. It is not uncommon for ladies to imagine that it is immodest for them to speak in the early part of a meeting, and therefore wait till near the close. This is an error, especially where there seems to be little inclination in others to occupy the time. It certainly is not religious to sit and let the time run to waste. The impression is decidedly bad on the congregation. They naturally infer that the tide is clear down. Under these circumstances it would be emphatically appropriate for a lady to rise and say that "she came to the meeting intending to speak a few words, and thinking that she would be less in the way of others by speaking early, she would improve the present opportunity." If ladies would determine to speak for God, and think of something proper to say, and pray for the help of the Spirit, that they may speak effectively, they would be ready, and might give the meeting a much higher tone than it usually receives under the waiting policy. Men, coming in from their cares and labor, want a little time to prepare. If the ladies would occupy the first half hour, their husbands and brothers would then, probably, be ready for action. Why should they not?

It is the most important part of the meeting, as it gives shape and temper to what is to follow. A spirited beginning is a great acquisition for a prayer meeting.

But, do you say, "I have no voice, I cannot speak?" If that be true, you are excusable. But do you not speak clearly and forcibly on other occasions? Few seem to be wanting in voice at the sociable, or in private life. Perhaps you plead the want of courage. Most people are troubled in this respect, some more, some less. But that will come by practice. In other cases, where your courage fails, you brace yourself and say, "I will not be afraid, I will do my duty." Why should you not take the same course in regard to speaking? It will bring you deliverance.

Remember that you have a talent that the cause of God needs, just where you are. Some sinner is waiting to hear your voice in expostulation or prayer; you are God's appointed agent to him. If you neglect your duty, he may be lost forever. O, my sister, take up the cross, and speak out! Possibly you think that you have not religion enough, and it may be so; but this is the way to get more. Spiritual ac-

activity brings joy and peace in believing. Unto every one that hath—(has improved his talent)—shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not (who hideth his talent), shall be taken away even that which he hath." (Mat. xxv. 25.) Then, open your mouth for God.

"Who dares stand idle on the harvest plain,
While all around her waves the golden grain,
And every servant hears the Master say,
Go, work to-day?"

"Toil on, faint not, keep watch and pray;
Be wise, the erring soul to win;
Go forth into the world's highway,
Compel the wanderer to come in.
Toil on, and in thy toil rejoice;
For toil comes rest, for exile, home;
Soon shalt thou hear the Bridgroom's voice,
The midnight peal, Behold I come!"

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